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The Knight of the Bright Star

Abbie Phillips Walker

Once upon a time there lived a prince named Lorenzo. Although he was a prince, he was quite poor and lived with his mother and one servant in a mountain far from the land of his birth.

His father, the King, had been killed in a battle with another king, who took away the wealth and the castles of the defeated King, leaving Prince Lorenzo and his mother nothing of their former grandeur.

Prince Lorenzo grew up with a longing for vengeance in his heart, and often at night his mother would find him gazing in the direction of his old home as he stood alone under the stars.

"Son," said the Queen-mother one night, "why do you gaze so intently into the distance? Why are you so sad?"

"There is bitterness in my heart for my father's enemy who has robbed me of all the happiness and pleasure in the great world outside," replied the Prince.

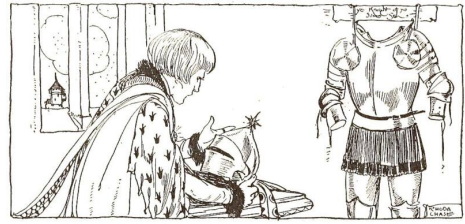
"Let me go, mother, and seek my fortune, and I may be able to avenge the wrongs done to you and me."

"Vengeance does not belong to us, my son," said the Queen-mother. "You must not take upon yourself that which is not your right."

"Go out in the world and taste its pleasures, but keep your Star of Hope as bright as those shining in the heavens over your head if you wish for happiness."

The next morning Prince Lorenzo started on his journey. He was dressed in a shining suit of mail and sat upon a white horse with trappings of silver. In the center of his helmet was a little silver star which his mother gave him with these words:

"My son, may your armor protect you from all evil and may this star be your guide. It is enchanted, for it was given to me by a fairy when I was Queen and your father King. If ever it grows dim look into your own heart to find the cause, and, finding it, cast it from you if you wish for happiness."



Prince Lorenzo promised to look to the brightness of the little star and rode away to seek his happiness.

After several days he came to a big city, the City of Pleasure it was called, and those who lived there told him his armor was much too heavy for one so young to wear.

"Cast it aside," they told the Prince, "and we will show you the joys of living."

So the Prince listened and followed the people in the City of Pleasure to a beautiful palace where merriment reigned, and laid aside his armor for a lighter garb. One day Prince Lorenzo looked from the Palace of Merriment and saw all around the castle men, women, and children working, and on their faces the look of misery.

"Who are these creatures?" he asked his companions.

"Those are the toilers who make the money for us to spend," was the reply. "Look at us and forget these creatures and be merry."

But the Prince could no more be merry; he remembered his Star of Hope his mother had given him and hurried to find it.

Instead of the shining star he had left he found it dim and dull, and then he remembered his mother's words, "Look into your own heart to find the cause." His love of wealth and pleasure had driven out all thoughts of others, and he had cared not how he gained these things, so long as he had them.

"My selfishness has dimmed my Star of Hope," said the Prince; "I must leave the City of Pleasure and the Palace of Merriment, for this is not happiness."

He buckled on the cast-off armor and rode away. As he rode past the toilers he threw among them all the gold he had gained while in the City of Pleasure.

Far away from the city he rode, and found himself in the midst of sickness and suffering.

Dismounting, the Prince ministered to the sufferers' needs and forgot all else until he fell asleep from exhaustion.

When he awoke his horse stood beside him, and in the moonlight the little star shone brightly from its place in his helmet on the ground at his side. Prince Lorenzo jumped to his feet and placed the helmet on his head. He had tasted the joy of good deeds. He no longer looked for pleasure in selfishness, and the bitterness of vengeance had gone from his heart.

Back to his mother he rode with the little star shining. "You have won, my son!" she cried as she met him. "All my love for you could not teach you how to gain real happiness; selfish pleasure and love of vengeance dull our Star of Hope, but only those who have learned the lesson for themselves can know this."

Prince Lorenzo was surprised one morning to see coming up the mountain, where he and his mother lived, an army of brightly dressed soldiers. When they came nearer he saw they were the soldiers that once had served his father, the King.

"The King who wronged you is dead," they told Prince Lorenzo, "and before he died he made us promise to find you and the Queen and bring you back to your kingdom, which he wrongfully took from you."

Of course Prince Lorenzo and his mother rejoiced to know that once more they would live in their former home, and lost no time in starting out on the journey.

"Your Star of Hope has brought you through tribulations into peace and happiness," said his mother, "and all wrongs are righted, but if it had become dulled by selfishness and vengeance, my son, we still might be in the darkness of despair."

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