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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Lost Years

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Once upon a time there was a king who took great care of his subjects. He had arranged that everyone had enough money, constructed beautiful roads and built good hospitals. All the people in the country had to work hard, but they lived in comfort and peace. And what they loved doing most was say to each other: 'Oh how well off we are here.'

The king himself also loved life. His ideal day was going for a walk in his garden to smell the flowers, swimming and playing with his kids in the afternoon and in the evening baking cookies with his wife and friends. And the king couldn't help but to say: 'Oh how well off we are here.'

But one day the peace in the country was greatly disturbed by a new kind, a very small troll. These trolls spread fast across the whole country and they let people disappear. The king and his subjects were terrified. And although the king had no idea how to solve this problem, he said: 'Don't worry, I am going to solve this.'



The king quickly took drastic measures:

- Flowers were not allowed to bloom anymore, because a troll could be hiding in them.
- Cookies were not allowed to be baked anymore, because a troll could be hiding in them.
- Swimming was not allowed anymore, because a troll could be hiding in the water.
- Playing was not allowed anymore, because that could possibly attract the trolls.

And though the people were very sad about this, they said to each other: 'The king has always taken good care of us. He shall know best now too.' And that's why everybody did as the king asked. But it didn't really help. Fearful and to his wits end the king sat down in his throne when suddenly an evil wizard appeared who said: 'Let's make a trade. Your treasure, for my magic potion. Everybody who drinks it becomes invisible to trolls.'

Overjoyed the king called his subjects together and started handing out the potion. Out of joy, most people drank the potion and they believed they were

safe from the trolls. They were after all invisible. The king was happy too: he had saved his subjects. An amazing achievement.

But after a while it became clear that the potion only worked for a little while and more and more people were kidnapped by the trolls. Scared and angry the king blamed the people who hadn't drank the potion. It was all their fault! They didn't do as he asked! He sat down in his throne and again the evil wizard appeared: 'I have made a new potion that makes people longer invisible to trolls. Give me your treasury and banish the people who didn't drink the potion last time and I will give you the new potion.'

The king was overjoyed! He called his subject together and said: 'If you didn't take the potion last time, you are now banished. For the rest of the people: here is a new potion that will make you invisible longer.' The people danced with joy and said to each other: 'We are so well off here.' A small group of people didn't want the second potion and they were ridiculed and banished.

But what people didn't know was that the potion of the wizard also gave you a black spot before your eyes. Because of this the wizard could take much more from the treasury than what they had agreed on. When the second potion stopped working, the evil wizard had a third potion ready. Again a small group of people didn't want to drink it. Again they were ridiculed and banished.

This continued for years, until the king became ill. On his deathbed he thought about the years before the trolls and suddenly realized he hadn't smelled a flower, hadn't baked any cookies, hadn't swam, hadn't played with his kids and hadn't seen his friends in years. Sobbing he said: 'I would give anything to enjoy all those things one more time.'

Just as the king was about to close his eyes for the last time a fairy appeared who said: 'King, take back all the restrictions you have made and tell your subjects to no longer live in fear, but to enjoy life in all its glory as long as they still can. Then I will make sure you can smell a flower, bake cookies, swim, play with your children and visit your friends one last time.'

Sooner said than done. The king died a peaceful death, the banished subjects returned and though sometimes the trolls still took people, nobody lived in fear anymore.



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