



Dorani

Andrew Lang'S Fairy Books

Indian

Intermediate

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Once upon a time there lived in a city of Hindustan a seller of scents and essences, who had a very beautiful daughter named Dorani. This maiden had a friend who was a fairy, and the two were high in favour with Indra, the king of fairyland, because they were able to sing so sweetly and dance so deftly that no one in the kingdom could equal them for grace and beauty. Dorani had the most lovely hair in the world, for it was like spun gold, and the smell of it was like the smell of fresh roses. But her locks were so long and thick that the weight of it was often unbearable, and one day she cut off a shining tress, and wrapping it in a large leaf, threw it in the river which ran just below her window. Now it happened that the king's son was out hunting, and had gone down to the river to drink, when there floated towards him a folded leaf, from which came a perfume of roses. The prince, with idle curiosity, took a step into the water and caught the leaf as it was sailing by. He opened it, and within he found a lock of hair like spun gold, and from which came a faint, exquisite odour.

When the prince reached home that day he looked so sad and was so quiet that his father wondered if any ill had befallen him, and asked what was the matter. Then the youth took from his breast the tress of hair which he had found in the river, and holding it up to the light, replied:

'See, my father, was ever hair like this? Unless I may win and marry the maiden that owns that lock I must die!'

So the king immediately sent heralds throughout all his dominions to search for the damsel with hair like spun gold; and at last he learned that she was the daughter of the scent-seller. The object of the herald's mission was

quickly noised abroad, and Dorani heard of it with the rest; and, one day, she said to her father:

‘If the hair is mine, and the king requires me to marry his son I must do so; but, remember, you must tell him that if, after the wedding, I stay all day at the palace, every night will be spent in my old home.’

The old man listened to her with amazement, but answered nothing, as he knew she was wiser than he. Of course the hair was Dorani’s, and the heralds soon returned and informed the king, their master, who summoned the scent-seller, and told him that he wished for his daughter to be given in marriage to the prince. The father bowed his head three times to the ground, and replied:

‘Your highness is our lord, and all that you bid us we will do. The maiden asks this only — that if, after the wedding, she stays all day at the palace, she may go back each night to her father’s house.’

The king thought this a very strange request; but said to himself it was, after all, his son’s affair, and the girl would surely soon get tired of going to and fro. So he made no difficulty, and everything was speedily arranged and the wedding was celebrated with great rejoicings.

At first, the condition attaching to his wedding with the lovely Dorani troubled the prince very little, for he thought that he would at least see his bride all day. But, to his dismay, he found that she would do nothing but sit the whole time upon a stool with her head bowed forward upon her knees, and he could never persuade her to say a single word. Each evening she was carried in a palanquin to her father’s house, and each morning she was brought back soon after daybreak; and yet never a sound passed her lips, nor did she show by any sign that she saw, or heard, or heeded her husband.

One evening the prince, very unhappy and troubled, was wandering in an old and beautiful garden near the palace. The gardener was a very aged man, who had served the prince’s great grandfather; and when he saw the prince he came and bowed himself to him, and said:

‘Child ! child ! why do you look so sad — is aught the matter ?’ Then the prince replied, ‘I am sad, old friend, because I have married a wife as lovely as the stars, but she will not speak to me, and I know not what to do. Night after night she leaves me for her father’s house, and day after day she sits in mine as though turned to stone, and utters no word, whatever I may do or say.’

The old man stood thinking for a moment, and then he hobbled off to his own cottage. A little later he came back to the prince with five or six small packets, which he placed in his hands and said:

‘To-morrow, when your bride leaves the palace, sprinkle the powder from one of these packets upon your body, and while seeing clearly, you will become yourself invisible. More I cannot do for you, but may all go well !’

And the prince thanked him, and put the packets carefully away in his turban.

The next night, when Dorani left for her father’s house in her palanquin, the prince took out a packet of the magic powder and sprinkled it over himself, and then hurried after her. He soon found that, as the old man had promised, he was invisible to everyone, although he felt as usual, and could see all that passed. He speedily overtook the palanquin and walked beside it to the scent-seller’s dwelling. There it was set down, and, when his bride, closely veiled, left it and entered the house, he, too, entered unperceived.

At the first door Dorani removed one veil; then she entered another doorway at the end of a passage where she removed another veil; next she mounted the stairs, and at the door of the women’s quarters removed a third veil. After this she proceeded to her own room where were set two large basins, one of attar of roses and one of water; in these she washed herself, and afterwards called for food. A servant brought her a bowl of curds, which she ate hastily, and then arrayed herself in a robe of silver, and wound about her strings of pearls, while a wreath of roses crowned her hair. When fully dressed, she seated herself upon a four-legged stool over which was a canopy with silken curtains, these she drew around her, and then called out:

‘Fly, stool, to the palace of rajah Indra.’

Instantly the stool rose in the air, and the invisible prince, who had watched all these proceedings with great wonder, seized it by one leg as it flew away, and found himself being borne through the air at a rapid rate.

In a short while they arrived at the house of the fairy who, as I told you before, was the favourite friend of Dorani. The fairy stood waiting on the threshold, as beautifully dressed as Dorani herself was, and when the stool stopped at her door she cried in astonishment:

‘Why, the stool is flying all crooked to-day ! What is the reason of that, I wonder ? I suspect that you have been talking to your husband, and so it will not fly straight.’

But Dorani declared that she had not spoken one word to him, and she couldn’t think why the stool flew as if

weighed down at one side. The fairy still looked doubtful, but made no answer, and took her seat beside Dorani, the prince again holding tightly one leg. Then the stool flew on through the air until it came to the palace of Indra the rajah.

All through the night the women sang and danced before the rajah Indra, whilst a magic lute played of itself the most bewitching music; till the prince, who sat watching it all, was quite entranced. Just before dawn the rajah gave the signal to cease; and again the two women seated themselves on the stool, and, with the prince clinging to the leg, it flew back to earth, and bore Dorani and her husband safely to the scent-seller's shop.

Here the prince hurried away by himself past Dorani's palanquin with its sleepy bearers, straight on to the palace; and as he passed the threshold of his own rooms he became visible again. Then he lay down upon a couch and waited for Dorani's arrival.

As soon as she arrived she took a seat and remained as silent as usual, with her head bowed on her knees. For a while not a sound was heard, but presently the prince said:

'I dreamed a curious dream last night, and as it was all about you I am going to tell it you, although you heed nothing.'

The girl, indeed, took no notice of his words, but in spite of that he proceeded to relate every single thing that had happened the evening before, leaving out no detail of all that he had seen or heard. And when he praised her singing — and his voice shook a little — Dorani just looked at him; but she said naught, though, in her own mind, she was filled with wonder. 'What a dream!' she thought. 'Could it have been a dream? How could he have learnt in a dream all she had done or said?' Still she kept silent; only she looked that once at the prince, and then remained all day as before, with her head bowed upon her knees.

When night came the prince again made himself invisible and followed her. The same things happened again as had happened before, but Dorani sang better than ever. In the morning the prince a second time told Dorani all that she had done, pretending that he had dreamt of it. Directly he had finished Dorani gazed at him, and said:

'Is it true that you dreamt this, or were you really there?'

'I was there,' answered the prince.

'But why do you follow me ?' asked the girl.

'Because,' replied the prince, 'I love you, and to be with you is happiness.'

This time Dorani's eyelids quivered; but she said no more, and was silent the rest of the day. However, in the evening, just as she was stepping into her palanquin, she said to the prince:

'If you love me, prove it by not following me to-night.'

And so the prince did as she wished, and stayed at home.

That evening the magic stool flew so unsteadily that they could hardly keep their seats, and at last the fairy exclaimed:

'There is only one reason that it should jerk like this ! You have been talking to your husband !'

And Dorani replied: 'Yes, I have spoken; oh, yes, I have spoken !' But no more would she say.

That night Dorani sang so marvellously that at the end the rajah Indra rose up and vowed that she might ask what she would and he would give it to her. At first she was silent; but, when he pressed her, she answered:

'Give me the magic lute.'

The rajah, when he heard this, was displeased with himself for having made so rash a promise, because this lute he valued above all his possessions. But as he had promised, so he must perform, and with an ill grace he handed it to her.

'You must never come here again,' said he, 'for, once having asked so much, how will you in future be content with smaller gifts ?'

Dorani bowed her head silently as she took the lute, and passed with the fairy out of the great gate, where the stool awaited them. More unsteadily than before, it flew back to earth.

When Dorani got to the palace that morning she asked the prince whether he had dreamt again. He laughed with happiness, for this time she had spoken to him of her own free will; and he replied:

‘No; but I begin to dream now — not of what has happened in the past, but of what may happen in the future.’

That day Dorani sat very quietly, but she answered the prince when he spoke to her; and when evening fell, and with it the time for her departure, she still sat on. Then the prince came close to her and said softly:

‘Are you not going to your house, Dorani?’

At that she rose and threw herself weeping into his arms, whispering gently:

‘Never again, my lord, never again would I leave thee!’

So the prince won his beautiful bride; and though they neither of them dealt any further with fairies and their magic, they learnt more daily of the magic of Love, which one may still learn, although fairy magic has fled away.

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