



King Bean

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Italian

Intermediate

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There was once an old man who had three daughters. One day the youngest called her father into her room, and requested him to go to King Bean and ask him whether he wished her for his wife. The poor old man said: "You want me to go, but what shall I do; I have never been there?" "No matter," she answered; "I wish you to obey me and go." Then he started on his way, and asked (for he did not know) where the king lived, and they pointed out the palace to him. When he was in the king's presence he said: "Your Majesty's servant." The king replied: "What do you want of me, my good old man?" Then he told him that his daughter was in love with him, and wanted to marry him. The king answered: "How can she be in love with me when she has never seen or known me?" "She is killing herself with weeping, and cannot stand it much longer." The king replied: "Here is a white handkerchief; let her dry her tears with it."

The old man took back the handkerchief and the message to his daughter, who said: "Well, after three or four days you must go back again, and tell him that I will kill myself or hang myself if he will not marry me."

The old man went back, and said to the king: "Your Majesty, do me the favor to marry my daughter; if not, she will make a great spectacle of herself." The king replied: "Behold how many handsome portraits I have here, and how many beautiful young girls I have, and not one of them suits me." The old man said: "She told me also to say to you that if you did not marry her she would kill herself or hang herself." Then the king gave him a knife and a rope, and said: "Here is a knife if she wants to kill herself, and here is a rope if she wants to hang herself."

The old man bore this message back to his daughter, who told her father that he must go back to the king again, and not leave him until he obtained his consent. The old man returned once more, and, falling on his knees before the king, said: "Do me this great favor: take my daughter for your wife; do not say no, for the poor girl is beside herself." The king answered: "Rise, good old man, and I will consent, for I am sorry for your long journeys. But hear what your daughter must do first. She must prepare three vessels: one of milk and water, one of milk, and one of rose-water. And here is a bean; when she wants to speak with me, let her go out on the balcony and open the bean, and I will come."

The old man returned home this time more satisfied, and told his daughter what she must do. She prepared the three vessels as directed, and then opened the bean on the balcony, and saw at once something flying from a distance towards her. It flew into the room by the balcony, and entered the vessel of water and milk to bathe; then it hastened into the vessel of milk, and finally into that containing the rose-water. And then there came out the handsomest youth that was ever seen, and made love to the young girl. Afterward, when they were tired of their love-making, he bade her good-night, and flew away.

After a time, when her sisters saw that she was always shut up in her room, the oldest said: "Why does she shut herself up in her room all the time?" The other sister replied: "Because she has King Bean, who is making love to her." The oldest said: "Wait until she goes to church, and then we will see what there is in her room." One day the youngest locked her door, and went to church. Then the two sisters broke open the door, and saw the three vessels prepared, and said: "This is the vessel in which the king goes to bathe." The oldest said: "Let us go down into the store, and get some broken glass, and put a little in each of the three vessels; and when the king bathes in them, the glass will pierce him and cut all his body."

They did so, and then left the room looking as it did first. When the youngest sister returned, she went to her room, and wished to talk with her husband. She opened the balcony, and then she opened the bean, and saw at once her husband come flying from a distance, with his arms open to embrace her

.He flew on to the balcony, and threw himself into the vessel of milk and water, and the pieces of glass pierced his body; then he entered the vessel of milk and that of rose-water, and his body was filled with the fragments of glass. When he came out of the rose-water, he flew away. Then his wife hastened out on the balcony, and saw a streak of blood wherever he had flown. Then she looked into the vessels, and saw all three full of blood, and cried: "I have been betrayed! I have been betrayed!"

She called her father, and told him that she had been betrayed by her sisters, and that she wished to go away and see whether she could cure her husband. She departed, and had not gone far when she found herself in a forest. There she saw a little house, with a little bit of a door, at which she knocked, and heard a voice saying, "Are you Christians?" She replied, "Yes." Then the door opened, and she saw a holy hermit, who said: "Blessed one, how did you get here? In a moment the witches will come who might bewitch you." She replied: "Father, I am seeking King Bean, who is ill." The hermit said: "I know nothing about him. Climb that tree; the witches will soon come, and you will learn something from them. If you want anything afterward, come to me, and I will give it to you."

When she was up the tree she heard a loud noise and the words, "Here we are! here we are!" and all the witches run and seat themselves on the ground in the midst of the forest, and begin to say: "The cripple is not here ! Where has that cursed cripple gone?" Some one answered: "Here she is coming!" Another said: "You cursed cripple, where have you been?" The cripple answered: "Be still; I will tell you now. But wait a moment until I shake this tree to see whether there is any one in it." The poor girl held on firmly so as not to fall down. After she had shaken it this cripple said to her companions: "Do you want me to tell you something? King Bean has only two hours to live." Another witch said: "What is the matter with him?" The cripple answered: "He had a wife, and she put some broken glass in the three vessels, and he filled his body with it." Another witch asked: "Is there nothing that can cure him?" The cripple replied: "It is very difficult." Another said: "What would be necessary?" The cripple said: "Listen to what it needs. One of us must be killed, and her blood put in a kettle, and have added to it the blood of one of these doves flying about here. When this blood is well mixed, it must be heated, and with this blood the whole body of the king must be anointed. Another thing yet is necessary. Under the stone you see there is a flask of water. The stone must be removed, a bottle of the water must be poured over the king, and all the bits of glass will come out of him, and in five minutes he will be safe and sound ."

Then the witches ate and drank until they were intoxicated and tired, and then threw themselves down on the ground to sleep. When the young girl saw that they were asleep, she descended quietly from the tree, knocked at the hermit's door, told him what the witches had said, and asked him for a kettle, knife, and bottle. He gave them to her, and caught a dove, which he killed, bled, and put the blood in a kettle.

The young girl did not know which one of the witches to kill, but finally she decided to kill the cripple who had spoken, and put her blood in the kettle. Afterward she lifted the stone, found the flask of water, and filled her bottle with it. She then returned to the hermit, and told him all she had done. He gave her a physician's dress, which she put on, and went to the palace of King Bean. There she asked the guards to let her pass, for she was going, she said, to see about curing the king. The guards refused at first, but, seeing her so confident, allowed her to enter. The king's mother went to her at once and said: "My good physician, if you can cure my son, you shall mount the throne, and I will give you my crown." "I have come in haste from a distance," said the physician, "and will cure him." Then the physician went to the kitchen, put the kettle on the fire, and afterward entered the room of the king, who had but a few minutes to live, anointed his whole body with the blood, and then poured the bottle of water all over him. Then the glass came out of his body, and in five minutes he was safe and sound. The king said: "Here, physician, is my crown. I wish to put it on your head." The physician

answered: "How did your Majesty come to have this slight trouble?" The king said: "On account of my wife. I went to make love to her, and she prepared for me three vessels of water and milk, of milk, and of rose-water, and put broken glass in them, so that I had my body full of it." Said the physician: "See whether it was your wife who worked you this treason! Could it not have been some one else?" "That is impossible," said the king; "for no one entered her room." "And what would you do," said the physician, "if you had her now in your hands?" "I would kill her with a knife." "You are right," said the physician; "because, if it is true that she has acted thus, she deserves nothing but death."

Then the physician said he must depart; but the king's mother said: "No, no! It shall never be said that after saving my son's life you went away. Here you are, and here I wish you to stay; and, on account of the promise I made you, I wish my crown to come upon your head." "I want but one thing," said the physician. "Command, doctor; only say what you desire." "I wish the king to write on the palm of one of my hands my name and surname, and on the other his name and surname." The king did so, and the physician said: "Now I am going to make some visits, then I will return."

Instead of returning, the pretended physician went to her own home, and threw away the water and milk in the three vessels, and put in other pure water and milk and rose-water. Then she went out on the balcony, and opened the bean. The king, who felt his heart opened, seized his dagger, and hastened to his wife to kill her. When she saw the dagger, she raised her hands, and the king beheld his name and hers. Then he threw his dagger away, bathed in the three vessels, and then threw his arms about his wife's neck, and exclaimed: "If you are the one who did me so much harm, you are also the one who cured me." She answered: "It was not I. I was betrayed by my sisters." "If that is so," said he, "come at once to my parents' house, and we will be married there." When she arrived at the king's palace, she related everything to his parents, and showed them her hands with her name and surname. Then the king's parents embraced her, and gave her a wedding, and she and the king loved each other as long as they lived.

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