

The Three Enchanted Princes

Stories From The Pentamerone

Italian

Advanced
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Once upon a time the King of Green-Bank had three daughters, who were perfect jewels, with whom three sons of the King of Fair-Meadow were desperately in love. But these Princes having been changed into animals by the spell of a fairy, the King of Green-Bank disdained to give them his daughters to wife. Whereupon the first, who was a beautiful Falcon, called together all the birds to a council; and there came the chaffinches, tomtits, woodpeckers, fly-catchers, jays, blackbirds, cuckoos, thrushes, and every other kind of bird. And when they were all assembled at his summons, he ordered them to destroy all the blossoms on the trees of Green-Bank, so that not a flower or leaf should remain. The second Prince, who was a Stag, summoning all the goats, rabbits, hares, hedgehogs, and other animals of that country, laid waste all the corn-fields so that there was not a single blade of grass or corn left. The third Prince, who was a Dolphin, consulting together with a hundred monsters of the sea, made such a tempest arise upon the coast that not a boat escaped.

Now the King saw that matters were going from bad to worse, and that he could not remedy the mischief which these three wild lovers were causing; so he resolved to get out of his trouble, and made up his mind to give them his daughters to wife; and thereupon, without wanting either feasts or songs, they carried their brides off and out of the kingdom.

On parting from her daughters, Granzolla the Queen gave each of them a ring, one exactly like the other,

telling them that if they happened to be separated, and after a while to meet again, or to see any of their kinsfolk, they would recognise one another by means of these rings. So taking their leave they departed. And the Falcon carried Fabiella, who was the eldest of the sisters, to the top of a mountain, which was so high that, passing the confines of the clouds, it reached with a dry head to a region where it never rains; and there, leading her to a most beautiful palace, she lived like a Queen.

The Stag carried Vasta, the second sister, into a wood, which was so thick that the Shades, when summoned by the Night, could not find their way out to escort her. There he placed her, as befitted her rank, in a wonderfully splendid house with a garden.

The Dolphin swam with Rita, the third sister, on his back into the middle of the sea, where, upon a large rock, he showed her a mansion in which three crowned Kings might live.

Meanwhile Granzolla gave birth to a fine little boy, whom they named Tittone. And when he was fifteen years old, hearing his mother lamenting continually that she never heard any tidings of her three daughters, who were married to three animals; he took it into his head to travel through the world until he should obtain some news of them. So after begging and entreating his father and mother for a long time, they granted him permission, bidding him take for his journey attendants and everything needful and befitting a Prince; and the Queen also gave him another ring similar to those she had given to her daughters.

Tittone went his way, and left no corner of Italy, not a nook of France, nor any part of Spain unsearched. Then he passed through England, and traversed Slavonia, and visited Poland, and, in short, travelled both east and west. At length, leaving all his servants, some at the taverns and some at the hospitals, he set out without a farthing in his pocket, and came to the top of the mountain where dwelt the Falcon and Fabiella. And as he stood there, beside himself with amazement, contemplating the beauty of the palace—the corner-stones of which were of porphyry, the walls of alabaster, the windows of gold, and the tiles of silver—his sister observed him, and ordering him to be called, she demanded who he was, whence he came, and what chance had brought him to that country. When Tittone told her his country, his father and mother, and his name, Fabiella knew him to be her brother, and the more when she compared the ring upon his finger with that which her mother had given her; and embracing him with great joy, she concealed him, fearing that her husband would be angry when he returned home.

As soon as the Falcon came home, Fabiella began to tell him that a great longing had come over her to see her parents. And the Falcon answered, “Let the wish pass, wife; for that cannot be unless the humour takes me.”

“Let us at least,” said Fabiella, “send to fetch one of my kinsfolk to keep my company.”

“And, pray, who will come so far to see you?” replied the Falcon.

“Nay, but if any one should come,” added Fabiella, “would you be displeased?”

“Why should I be displeased?” said the Falcon, “it would be enough that he were one of your kinsfolk to make me take him to my heart.”

When Fabiella heard this she took courage, and calling to her brother to come forth, she presented him to the Falcon, who exclaimed, “Five and five are ten; love passes through the glove, and water through the boot. A hearty welcome to you! you are master in this house; command, and do just as you like.” Then he gave orders that Tittone should be served and treated with the same honour as himself.

Now when Tittone had stayed a fortnight on the mountain, it came into his head to go forth and seek his other sisters. So taking leave of Fabiella and his brother-in-law, the Falcon gave him one of his feathers, saying, “Take this and prize it, my dear Tittone; for you may one day be in trouble, and you will then esteem it a

treasure. Enough—take good care of it; and if ever you meet with any mishap, throw it on the ground, and say, Come hither, come hither!’ and you shall have cause to thank me.”

Tittone wrapped the feather up in a sheet of paper, and, putting it in his pocket, after a thousand ceremonies departed. And travelling on and on a very long way, he arrived at last at the wood where the Stag lived with Vasta; and going, half-dead with hunger, into the garden to pluck some fruit, his sister saw him, and recognised him in the same manner as Fabiella had done. Then she presented Tittone to her husband, who received him with the greatest friendship, and treated him truly like a Prince.

At the end of a fortnight, when Tittone wished to depart, and go in search of his other sister, the Stag gave him one of his hairs, repeating the same words as the Falcon had spoken about the feather. And setting out on his way, with a bagful of crown-pieces which the Falcon had given him, and as many more which the Stag gave him, he walked on and on, until he came to the end of the earth, where, being stopped by the sea and unable to walk any further, he took ship, intending to seek through all the islands for tidings of his sister. So setting sail, he went about and about, until at length he was carried to an island, where lived the Dolphin with Rita. And no sooner had he landed, than his sister saw and recognised him in the same manner as the others had done, and he was received by her husband with all possible affection.

Now after a while Tittone wished to set out again to go and visit his father and mother, whom he had not seen for so long a time. So the Dolphin gave him one of his scales, telling him the same as the others had; and Tittone, mounting a horse, set out on his travels. But he had hardly proceeded half a mile from the seashore, when entering a wood—the abode of Fear and the Shades, where a continual fair of darkness and terror was kept up—he found a great tower in the middle of a lake, whose waters were kissing the feet of the trees, and entreating them not to let the Sun witness their pranks. At a window in the tower Tittone saw a most beautiful maiden sitting at the feet of a hideous dragon, who was asleep. When the damsel saw Tittone, she said in a low and piteous voice, “O noble youth, sent perchance by heaven to comfort me in my miseries in this place, where the face of a Christian is never seen, release me from the power of this tyrannical serpent, who has carried me off from my father, the King of Bright-Valley, and shut me up in this frightful tower, where I must die a miserable death.”

“Alas, my beauteous lady!” replied Tittone, “what can I do to serve thee? Who can pass this lake? Who can climb

this tower? Who can approach yon horrid dragon, that carries terror in his look, sows fear, and causes dismay to spring up? But softly, wait a minute, and we'll find a way with another's help to drive this serpent away. Step by step—the more haste, the worse speed: we shall soon see whether tis egg or wind.” And so saying he threw the feather, the hair, and the scale, which his brothers-in-law had given him, on the ground, exclaiming, “Come hither, come hither!” And falling on the earth like drops of summer rain, which makes the frogs spring up, suddenly there appeared the Falcon, the Stag, and the Dolphin, who cried out all together, “Behold us here! what are your commands?”

When Tittone saw this, he said with great joy, “I wish for nothing but to release this poor damsel from the claws of yon dragon, to take her away from this tower, to lay it all in ruins, and to carry this beautiful lady home with me as my wife.”

“Hush!” answered the Falcon, “for the bean springs up where you least expect it. We'll soon make him dance upon a sixpence, and take good care that he shall have little ground enough.”

“Let us lose no time,” said the Stag, “troubles and macaroni are swallowed hot.”

So the Falcon summoned a large flock of griffins, who, flying to the window of the tower, carried off the damsel, bearing her over the lake to where Tittone was standing with his three brothers-in-law; and if from afar she appeared a moon, believe me, when near she looked truly like a sun, she was so beautiful.

Whilst Tittone was embracing her and telling her how he loved her, the dragon awoke; and, rushing out of the window, he came swimming across the lake to devour Tittone. But the Stag instantly called up a squadron of lions, tigers, panthers, bears, and wild-cats, who, falling upon the dragon, tore him in pieces with their claws. Then Tittone wishing to depart, the Dolphin said, “I likewise desire to do something to serve you.” And in order that no trace should remain of the frightful and accursed place, he made the sea rise so high that, overflowing its bounds, it attacked the tower furiously, and overthrew it to its foundations.

When Tittone saw these things, he thanked the animals in the best manner he could, telling the damsel at the same time that she ought to do so too, as it was by their aid she had escaped from peril. But the animals answered, “Nay, we ought rather to thank this beauteous lady, since she is the means of restoring us to our proper shapes; for a spell was laid upon us at our birth, caused by our mother's having offended a fairy, and we

were compelled to remain in the form of animals until we should have freed the daughter of a King from some great trouble. And now behold the time is arrived which we have longed for; the fruit is ripe, and we already feel new spirit in our breasts, new blood in our veins." So saying, they were changed into three handsome youths, and one after another they embraced their brother-in-law, and shook hands with the lady, who was in an ecstasy of joy.

When Tittone saw this, he was on the point of fainting away; and heaving a deep sigh, he said, "O Heavens! why have not my mother and father a share in this happiness? They would be out of their wits with joy were they to see such graceful and handsome sons-in-law before their eyes."

"Nay," answered the Princes, "'tis not yet night; the shame at seeing ourselves so transformed obliged us to flee from the sight of men; but now that, thank Heaven! we can appear in the world again, we will all go and live with our wives under one roof, and spend our lives merrily. Let us, therefore, set out instantly, and before the Sun to-morrow morning unpacks the bales of his rays at the custom-house of the East, our wives shall be with you."

So saying, in order that they might not have to go on foot—for there was only an old broken-down mare which Tittone had brought—the brothers caused a most beautiful coach to appear, drawn by six lions, in which they all five seated themselves; and having travelled the whole day, they came in the evening to a tavern, where, whilst the supper was being prepared, they passed the time in reading all the proofs of men's ignorance which were scribbled upon the walls. At length, when all had eaten their fill and retired to rest, the three youths, feigning to go to bed, went out and walked about the whole night long, till in the morning, when the Stars, like bashful maidens, retire from the gaze of the Sun, they found themselves in the same inn with their wives, whereupon there was a great embracing, and a joy beyond the beyonds. Then they all eight seated themselves in the same coach, and after a long journey arrived at Green-Bank, where they were received with incredible affection by the King and Queen, who had not only regained the capital of four children, whom they had considered lost, but likewise the interest of three sons-in-law and a daughter-in-law, who were verily four columns of the Temple of Beauty. And when the news of the adventures of their children was brought to the Kings of Fair-Meadow and Bright-Valley, they both came to the feasts which were made, adding the rich ingredient of joy to the porridge of their satisfaction, and receiving a full recompense for all their past misfortunes; for—

“One hour of joy dispels the cares
And sufferings of a thousand years.”

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