

The Wise King of Leon

Charles Sellers

Portuguese

Advanced
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There was a rich nobleman who had three sons; and the king, being very fond of him, appointed the eldest son his page, the second his butler, and the youngest his barber.

The barber fell in love with the king's only daughter, who was equally fond of him; and when this came to the ears of the king, he decided on putting a stop to it; so he called for the princess, and said—

“I know that you are in love with my barber, and if you insist on marrying him I will have you killed.”

The princess, on hearing her father say this, became very sorrowful, and asked him to allow her one day for consideration, to which the king acceded.

She then went to her room, and getting together some of her finest dresses, she made them up into a bundle, and left the palace by a secret door.

For seven days and nights did the princess walk through the forest, subsisting on wild fruit and the water from the rivulets. For seven days and nights did her father seek for her, and, not finding her, he sent for the barber, and told him that he must immediately go in search of the princess, and if he did not bring her back within a year he should die.

At the end of the seventh day the princess was so tired that she could not continue her journey; and being afraid of the wolves, she managed to climb on to the first branch of a large oak-tree; and when there, discovering that the trunk was hollow, she let herself slip down into the hollow, and there rested.

She had not been long in her hiding-place when her lover, the barber, approached, sighing, and saying to himself—

“Woe is me, for I shall never find the princess! There are so many lovely damsels in Castille, and yet I must fall in love with the king’s only daughter.”

The princess, hearing him speak, said in a disguised voice—

“Woe is the king’s daughter! There are so many gallants in Spain, and yet she must fall in love with her father’s barber!”

The barber was much surprised to hear this apt rejoinder; but he could not find out from whence the voice came. He looked about everywhere, and at last, feeling sleepy, he lay down under the oak-tree where the princess was hidden.

In a very short time the barber was fast asleep; and the princess, hearing him breathe heavily, got out of her hiding-place, mounted the barber’s horse, which the king had given him, and rode away with the barber’s bundle of clothes, leaving her own in its place.

When she had ridden at full speed for some hours she dismounted, and opening the barber’s bundle, she then disrobed herself and put on male attire.

Next day she had arrived in the kingdom of Leon, and she rode up to the king’s palace and offered her services to the king as barber.

The king, being much struck by the stately bearing of the stranger, willingly accepted the proffered services.

When the real barber awoke and found his horse and clothes gone he was much alarmed; but seeing a bundle close to him he opened it, and was delighted to find his lover’s dresses in it.

Being a beardless youth, and very handsome, he bethought him of putting on the princess's finest dress; and as his hair was very long and curly, according to the fashion of the day, he made a very pretty woman.

Foot-sore and weary, he at last arrived at the palace of the King of Leon, and was admitted to the king's presence as the daughter of the neighbouring King of Castille.

The King of Leon was so charmed with the beauty of the new arrival that he could not sleep, and so he sent for the barber, to whom he confided his love.

The real princess was much astonished to hear that her lover was in the palace, for she guessed it was he in female attire; but she kept quiet until her lover was asleep in bed, and then she stole into his room, put back his clothes, and took her own away.

Next morning when the real barber awoke and found his magnificent dresses gone and his male attire restored to him he was indeed surprised; but there was no help for it—he must again become a man and a barber.

The princess put on her own clothes, and hid in a cupboard of the room. When she saw her lover leave the room, and heard him go down the staircase, she closed the door behind him and finished her toilet.

The king got up earlier than usual, for he was so anxious to see the new arrival; but before doing so he sent for the barber to shave him.

They looked everywhere for him, but without success; and at last, in despair, they went to the bedroom of the new arrival, and, knocking at the door, intimated the king's command that she should present herself.

The princess was ready; and, slipping past the courtiers, presented herself before the king.

“Who are you?” inquired the king.

“I am the daughter of the King of Castille, as I informed your mercy yesterday,” answered the princess.

“But where, then, is my barber?” rejoined the king.

“What does one king's daughter know about another king's barber?” said the princess.

At this moment the real barber presented himself, and humbly begged the king's pardon for having deceived him.

"But who are you?" roared the king. "Are you a barber or a thief?"

"I am the youngest son of a marquess," answered the youth, "a barber by trade, and affianced to the daughter of the King of Castille."

Then the princess stepped forward and explained everything to the king, who was so interested with what he heard, that the princess and the barber had to tell the tale over and over again to him. Then he said—

"I have been shaved by the King of Castille's daughter, and I have courted his barber. I will not be again deceived. They shall now be man and wife for ever."

This was the wise King of Leon.

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