



# *Lady Wisdom's Gift*

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Fable, Magic, Religious

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Once upon a time in a land so far away that not even your history books have heard of it, there lived an old man. His cottage was on the outskirts of town, as he like solitude a great deal more than being with people. Life was peaceful and nothing incredible happened except for the occasional oddity of a speckled cow being born, or a particularly bountiful harvest...

One day, however, he awoke from his sleep, and with a heavy sigh admitted to himself that he was rather lonely, and maybe his farm animals weren't enough to keep him company. "Perhaps I shall go into town and find myself a friend", he mused.

With this newfound hope of companionship, he hopped out of bed with a thrust of zeal that only invigorating ideas and thoughts can give, and proceeded to dress in his best trousers and shirt. With one final look in the mirror, and an approving nod at his reflection, he reached for his walking stick and satchel, and began his journey into town.

He hadn't traveled too far before he came upon an old hag sitting on the side of the road.

"You are looking for something..." the hag crooned.

"Why, yes, as a matter of fact. Also, good day to you... also who are you?" The man said, puzzled.

"Never mind who I am. You're going into town, I see. Pray sir, give me the food that you have packed for yourself; I am hungry. The people coming from the town never notice me no matter how loud I cry. You're coming from out of town, so maybe you're different."

The man paused; he only brought a few figs (the harvest was not so bountiful this year), and it was barely

enough to sustain him for the rest of the journey. But as he looked at the old woman, he noticed her eyes. They were dark, and quiet, as if they contained many secrets, but the kind that makes you feel safe. He reached into his satchel, grabbed his figs, and gave it to her saying, “Madam, I only have these small pieces of fruit, but whatever is mine is yours, and I should like to be your friend.”

She looked up at him, smiled, and her dark eyes began to shine brighter, and brighter, until her entire body was so brilliant, that the man could not bear it, and he covered his eyes with his hands...

The light subsided. Before him stood the most beautiful woman he could possibly have imagined. It was the kind of beauty that was so piercing and pure, that he could not look at her for more than a few seconds before being overcome with a feeling of unworthiness. It was this painful juxtaposition of her radiance and his normalcy, that he became aware of his own flaws, and every wrong he had done in his life began to play on repeat in his mind. His entire being was in her light, and nothing was hidden, nor could anything be hidden. In that moment he had never felt so overwhelmingly known.

Falling to his knees, the old man cried out, “Please... I am not worthy.”

“Maybe not, but that’s not important right now.” The woman’s voice was soft, but dangerous, and sounded more like a song than words.

“My name is Wisdom, and I need your help. The people in the town have been put under a terrible curse; it must be broken. They have sold their joy for bondage, and have enslaved themselves for the sake of owning things. They have forgotten what it means to be human, to love, to care for one another. They are blinded by greed... and all interactions have become transactions. Even friendship must be purchased, for they have forgotten what it means to give. Everything they believe, they must see. Everything they know, they must touch. And they no longer have any dreams.”

She waved her hands in a circular motion, and all of a sudden a tiny box appeared in her palms. She looked at it tenderly, then at the man.

“Here, take this music box, and play the tune... only this melody can break the spell. But they can’t just hear it, they have to listen.”

“My lady Wisdom, whatever you say, I will do. But may I hear it first?”

“Of course! But this tune you already know well.” She opened the box. The old man couldn’t hear anything at first; something like a high-pitched ring, so high you could barely make it out. “Keep listening....” she

whispered dotingly.

...and then in whirl of colors, the tune came belting out. Not loudly, but penetrating nonetheless. It was a tune of light and feelings– fierce, delightful whimsy that felt like starlight when the night is especially dark. It felt like the color of the leaves when the sun shines through a canopy of trees. It felt like summer and childhood all at once. It felt like home.

“What is this?” He asked with desperation in his voice.

“Spirit. This melody is called Spirit: a long, forgotten gift, one that the townspeople have forsaken. Please play it for them, and maybe they will learn to feel again.”

For the first time in his life, he felt as though he were a part of something important, something greater than his own wishes and desires (however grave or petty they might be). He looked up to thank Wisdom, but she had vanished. In her place was a no hag, but a fig tree bearing many figs.

Taking this as a sign of urgency, he started off on the road again, this time with a gait of authority: galloping, instead of prodding, leaping instead of lagging.

Once he reached the town, he ran to the first person he saw: a woman. Perfect! He mused. Surely this lady will hear the tune and be broken from the spell...

“You there! Madam! Do come here; I have a melody to play for you!”

Her demeanor was frantic, and she ran to him as though in desperation.

Snatching the music box out of his hands, she demanded to hear the tune.

“Well, play it then! Play it now!”

The rest of the villagers heard her screams and made their way over.

“Play it! Play it!”

“I’ll buy it!”

“No– I’ll buy it!”

“Oh hush, I’m richer than you are...”

“Yes, but you’re ugly and I deserve a nice music box”

“Hah! I might be ugly, but you’re fat...”

“I daresay, you’re no Jack Sprat! Is that a triple chin you have, or are you just hiding the fourth roll of fat underneath another roll...”

“Daddy, I want it NOW– give it to me now!”

“Yes pumpkin, I’ll go get the music box for you...”

And in a whoosh the townspeople seemed to spring on the old man.

“Please! Stop! Let me play the tune!” The old man cried out.

“What’s this?!?!” A thunderous voice belted. A hush fell over the crowd, as a gluttonous bulge of a man emerged. “I daresay what’s all this ruckus? I’m the mayor of this town! Let me have a look!” And with that, the fat mayor grabbed the music box from the old man’s hands, and impatiently wound the tiny key, and began listening to the tune.

At once the old man heard the song, a sweet song of the Spirit, but the townspeople did not seem to hear anything.

“What’s this, old man? Are you tricking us? Where is the tune?”

The crowd shouted, and demanded to hear a song.

“Just keep listening, please!” The old man cried.

...but the townspeople wouldn’t listen. Instead all they heard was the sound of their own thoughts, their own troubles, their own self-ness. They had forgotten how to listen. They had forgotten how to imagine.

Frustrated, the fat mayor tore open the music box, demanding to know what the tune sounded like. His pudgy fingers squeezed in the tiny apparatus, and he picked apart the cogs and gears, looking for the tune.

“Where is it? Where is the song– what’s it called, Spirit or whatever... Give it to me!!!”

But now there was no song, only a broken music box that could now play no tune.

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