



The Prince of Eclatant

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Action/adventure, Magic

Once upon a time, in the prosperous Kingdom of Eclatant, lived a lively young Prince called Phillippe.

Eclatant was governed by the powerful and wise King Gabriel who brought prosperity to the region when he discovered the mystical Gem of the Sea out on a voyage. Legends say the Gem was thrown into the sea by Hera when she heard of Zeus' unfaithfulness and would bring wealth to the holder of the stone. Wealth it did bring to Eclatant. The kingdom stretched from the snowy peaks of Mount Tempest to the rocky coastal shores of Baleine and was a rich trading hub.

Philippe was the only child of the King and Queen and heir to the throne. At the young age of 12, he spent his days being educated in kingly ways and Eclatantian traditions. Philippe, however, was a curious child and preferred to run around with the sheep and sleep under the stars in the open fields. He often caused grief for his servants, in particular, Louis the butler, who relentlessly chased him around the castle grounds.

"Philippe! Philippe! Please come back and finish your royal lineage studies," cried Louis.

"I want to know what's out there!" he pointed to the small seaside town of Baleine, watching the small outline of people shuffle around the rocks on the coast.

As the sun dipped beneath the sea, Philippe and Louis returned to the palace for dinner with the King and Queen. Every day, he yearned to go outside the walls and every day he made the same request.

"Your majesty, I learnt of our ancestors, just like yesterday, but it does not quench my curiosity for the beauties

outside of the castle walls. Why can't we take a trip to Baleine and visit the commoners that we rule over?" he said.

The King furrowed his brow. "Again with this! My son, when will you listen to me? There are dangerous things which lurk outside the castle walls, beyond your knowledge. You are the heir to this kingdom, you must LEARN to govern a country. What would Eclatant do if you were hurt? I forbid you to go outside the castle walls."

Philippe forcefully yanked himself out of his father's grasp and let out a loud shriek.

"Why won't you tell me? Why can't I go? Why can't I be free like those in the town of Baleine!" as he ran towards the castle gates.

Moving his legs as quickly as he could, he came to a fork in the road covered in winter fog. A dim light flickered beyond the path on the left and Philippe silently crept towards the light. He heard the pitter patter of footsteps behind him and Louis' panicked voice shouting for him.

He looked into the dim light and found a lady dressed in scarlet robes and long white hair sitting on a boulder.

"Who's there? Can you tell me which way it is to Baleine?" he nervously asked.

"I am the Scarlet Maiden. This is the road to Mount Tempest. Baleine is that way," she pointed towards the path where voices could be heard calling for Philippe.

"I can help you get there. In fact, I can help you go anywhere if you help me too," she said while presenting him with a small vial of golden liquid.

Enchanted by the golden liquid, Philippe eagerly agreed.

"I just need three things. A treasured item of yours, a lock of the King's hair and the jewel in the middle of the King's crown in exchange for this potion which will allow you to go anywhere you want, undetected. Here's a magic chisel for the jewel and I will meet you outside the castle gate."

Excited by the prospect of exploring the wonders outside of the gates without fearing capture, Philippe grabbed the chisel and raced back to the castle to collect the items.

Philippe waited patiently in his quarters until the quiet lull of the ocean reverberated through the castle.

Tiptoeing to the King's chambers, he stealthily pried open the door and located the crown. With a gentle

nudge, the jewel popped out and fell onto his lap. Grabbing the scissors on the dresser, he snipped a small lock of hair and raced back to his chambers. Gathering his items together in a small embroidered pouch, he tiptoed once again to the castle gate to meet the Scarlet Maiden.

Holding a dim light to the items, she surveyed the items and passed the small vial to Philippe.

“A promise is a promise. Drink and be merry,” and with a swift flick of her fingers, she disappeared.

The next day, Philippe rose in the early hours and hastily gulped down the golden liquid and almost immediately, felt his body lighten.

He ran to the kitchen and pulled faces at the staff, however they did not react to his antics. He grabbed a slice of apple pie and took one bite before the pastry chef let out a loud scream.

“Ghost! Ghost in the kitchen!” and ran away.

Philippe climbed into the back of a carriage and silently sat across Louis and the servants as they made their way to the marketplace in Baleine. There, he hopped off and explored the coastal walk, took in the smell of fresh bread and walked amongst the commoners. He grabbed apples from carts, bread and cheese from the bakery and sat on a stool and enjoyed his breakfast.

People shrieked and screamed as they walked past him and yelled, “GHOST!”. Philippe tried to signal to them, however, the townsfolk cowered away, scared of what they were seeing. He looked down to the nearby puddle on the left of his stool and realised that he couldn't see his face. Staring at his hands, he placed them over the puddle, but only the apple was visible.

Realising what had happened, he raced through the town in search of Louis and once he found him, desperately held onto him and explained the situation. Louis, frightened as ever, tried to run, but recognising the young Prince's pleading voice, stopped to listen.

After relaying the story of the Scarlet Maiden, Louis scolded Philippe. “Didn't I tell you there were things you wouldn't understand outside of the castle!”. Louis grabbed a bucket and threw water and dirt over the Prince, allowing an outline to be shown.

“We need to see the White Maiden and seek her counsel,” as Louis dragged Philippe to a small secluded hut on

the edge of the village. A voice called, "Come in" and the door opened to a small lady, dressed in white and long fine golden hair.

"I have seen you coming from far away. My dear young Prince, you have been cursed by the Scarlet Maiden and I am afraid she has laid a strong curse on the King. We must obtain the Gem of the Sea and return it to the King before sundown to break the curse".

With a quick snap of her fingers, she transported Philippe and Louis to the top of Mount Tempest. Shivering due to the snow, the White Maiden sprinkled snow over Philippe to cleanse his dirt outline. They followed her through the snow storm, winding up and through the mountain until they reached a cave where the Scarlet Maiden sat nursing the brilliant gem.

"Philippe, when I say the word FLASH, run and steal the gem from the Scarlet Maiden," whispered the White Maiden. A couple of minutes later, the White Maiden entered the cave and shouted "FLASH!". At once a bright light shone into the cave, blinding the Scarlet Maiden. Philippe ran towards the Scarlet Maiden and grabbed the stone out of her hands as she cowered from the bright light and turned to dust.

"The sun is setting!" cried Louis. "We need to get back!". With a flick of her finger, the White Maiden transported Philippe and Louis back to the Palace. Philippe rushed to secure the gem back in place on the King's crown when he noticed his father lying and wheezing in bed. Although he couldn't see him, the King could hear his son's voice. Without wasting a moment, Philippe placed the stone back into the crown as the sun sank beyond the sea and the King began to regain his energy.

"Philippe my son! Where are you?", the King said while searching for his son. He felt around for his son and reached a small mound gathered by his blanket.

"Father, I've become invisible. This was supposed to reverse the curse, but I am stuck in this form. I am sorry for being mischievous and naughty, can you please forgive me?", Philippe cried as tears streamed down his face.

The King wrapped his arms around the small mound and said, "Always my son, I love you even though I cannot see you". Slowly, Philippe began to feel heavier as the blood and flesh rushed back to his fingers through to his feet. Elated at being able to see himself again, Philippe threw himself into his father and hugged him dearly.

Philippe grew up to become a wise King of Eclatant and always remembered the lesson he learnt, to trust that his family would love him even though they could not see him.

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