



The Sword Tree

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Action/Adventure, Animals, Humor

Once there was a boy named Tristan who was at that age (12) when boys start looking for a vocation in life. What some might call a “job.” So, he went to see his village’s careers counselor and took the aptitude tests and personality tests and they determined what the ideal job for him would be. They narrowed it down to three options:

1. GREEN GROCER
2. HERO
3. STANDUP COMEDIAN

Well, green grocer seemed kind of boring and standup comedy hadn’t been invented yet, so Tristan thought he should look into the middle one. Being a hero didn’t necessarily pay very much, there was a lot of travel involved and a certain amount of risk. But the hours were flexible and there was a great deal of prestige attached to the position. Plus there were perks like getting to ride a horse, marrying a princess and having someone write a fairy tale about you someday. So Tristan decided to go for it.

Of course, there are some things every hero needs...well, two, really. One was a horse (which he had; a nice sort of horse called Irene) and the other was a sword. But swords were expensive and Tristan was poor. He had nothing to trade for a sword and the Village Smithy did not work on credit.

“How can I be a hero without a sword?” he asked Irene who, of course, did not know as she was a horse.

“You must go East!” said a creepy voice. Tristan turned around and saw a Creepy Dude creeping out of the bushes. “Go East to the land of Dunsmore! There on a tree on a hill on an island in a lake in a bigger island in a

bigger lake grows the Sword Tree! Go there and pick a sword and you can be a true hero!" So saying, the Creepy Guy attempted to creep back into the bushes but, instead, fell over and crawled the rest of the way until he was out of sight.

"Wow. That guy was creepy," said Tristan. "But I don't have any other ideas so, let's go to Dunsmore!"

Tristan and Irene arrived at Dunsmore the following day. Dunsmore was a nice sort of kingdom ruled over by a nice sort of king. The people there were very friendly, until Tristan asked how to get to the Sword Tree. Then they got very nervous and advised him not to speak of such things any more. But Tristan was going to be a hero when he grew up, and he needed a sword. So he kept asking around about the Sword Tree until the Royal Guards picked him up and took him to the King.

"Why are you asking about the Sword Tree?" asked the King.

"Cuz I need a sword," said Tristan, which made sense.

"No one is permitted to go to the tree on the hill in the lake on the island in the...no, that's wrong. What is it again?"

The Prime Minister answered. "Tree on a hill on an island in a lake in a bigger island in a bigger lake, sire." That was his main job, reminding the King of things like that.

"But how am I to get a sword? I have but three gold coins and one which I thought was gold but which was actually just chocolate."

"Why do you need a sword so badly?"

"Because I'm going to be a hero when I grow up!"

"A hero, eh? Tell you what, I'll make a deal with you: I have a quest that needs questing. Complete the quest and I'll help you get a sword from the Sword Tree."

This struck Tristan as very fair so he agreed.

The quest the King had in mind was rescuing his daughter, Princess Sue, from a tower which was guarded by a giant. Several days ago, he had captured her and locked her in the tower, vowing only to release her if she agreed to marry him. She said no, so she was still being kept there. All Tristan had to do was distract the Giant

long enough to let Princess Sue escape...but how do you distract a Giant? Especially when you don't even have a sword?

"I may not have a sword," said Tristan, hiding in the trees where the Giant couldn't see, "but I have a horse! Okay, Irene, here's the plan," and he whispered his plan into Irene's ear. She nodded to show she understood and they sprang into action: Irene trotted out where the Giant could see her and began to dance. It was a pretty good dance, too. Especially for a horse. And, after all, a dancing horse is not something you see every day, and the Giant was captivated. In fact, he was watching Irene so closely, the he didn't even notice Princess Sue letting herself out through the front door and joining Tristan among the trees.

"Okay, that's enough!" shouted Tristan and Irene ran back to the trees, let Tristan and Princess Sue climb on her back, and sped back to the castle for all they were worth.

"Aw, is that all?" said the Giant, disappointed. "Well, it was a pretty good show while it lasted. So, Princess Sue, are you ready to say you'll marry—hey, where'd she go?"

"Well done, Tristan!" said the King. "You have returned my daughter, Princess Sue, who has been missing, lo, these many days. Now, I will fulfill my half of the bargain and do what I can to help you get to the Sword Tree."

The King called his many advisors together and each of them gave Tristan a useful item which he would need on his quest:

The Prime Minister gave him two copper coins.

The Chancellor gave him two silver coins ("Don't get them mixed up," he said).

The Captain of the Guards gave him a dagger with a gold handle.

The Head Magic Guy gave him a single pearl.

And Princess Sue gave him a little bag to carry it all in (and a kiss on the cheek! Tee hee!).

Tristan thanked them for their gifts and made his way toward the lake.

At the shore of the lake, was a ferryman. "Pay me your opinion to get across," he said. Tristan knew that a person's opinion was sometimes called his "two cents" so he gave the two copper coins to the ferryman. "Your horse has to stay behind," said the ferryman. "She'd sink the boat."

"Sorry, Irene," said Tristan, but she didn't mind being left behind. In fact she took a nap and slept through the rest of the story.

The ferryman took Tristan across to the island in the center of the lake. He started walking across to the lake in the center of this island, but the lake was entirely surrounded by thorns and briars. Taking out the gold-handled dagger, he cut a path through the thorns and found himself at the banks of another lake with another (slightly shorter) ferryman asking for two silver coins.

"Good thing I didn't get the coins mixed up," he said to himself. He paid the ferryman and made his way to the second island. He climbed to the top of the hill and saw, to his dismay, that the Sword Tree was guarded by a manticore! He had to...

Oh, right, sorry. A manticore is a kind of animal with a lion's head, eagle's wings and a long scorpion-like tail. They're not too nice.

"All I have left is the pearl. Oh well, here goes noting." He held up the pearl defiantly and said, "BE GONE FOUL BEAST!!!" But nothing happened. He tried waving it around, tossing it up in the air, holding it up while saying magic words he'd read in storybooks but nothing worked. Finally he was forced to conclude that this was not a magical pearl imbued with great power and strength...it was just a normal pearl. "But how am I going to get past the manticore with a plain, ordinary..."

"Hey, is that a pearl?" asked the Manticore. "it's pretty!"

"Er, yeah it is. Hey! You can have it if you let me take a sword from the tree."

"Sweet deal!" So Tristan gave the pearl to the Manticore who stepped aside long enough for Tristan to choose a really cool sword from the tree. "It's customary," said the Manticore, "for heroes to name their swords."

"Is it? Okay, then I'll call it...The Mantisword!"

“Nice!”

“Hey, I don’t have any coins left to get back across the lakes. Could you give me a lift?”

“Sure, hop on my back!”

So the Manticore flew Tristan over the lake/island/lake and set him down right next to Irene, who was just waking up from her nap. Then he held up the sword and said, “Now, I am a true hero!!!!”

And he was!

So Tristan became a hero and, with the help of his trusty horse, Irene, and his vorpal blade, the Mantisword, became famous throughout the land for his deeds of heroism and bravery. Then one day he met a really cool princess and they got married and lived happily ever after and stuff! Yay!

Sorry, I got a little too excited there.

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