



THE KING OF THE WIND

In a land far away, there once lived a king who had a son and a daughter. What a charming couple they were, a handsome devil of a boy and a girl as beautiful as the stars. Their daddy had a lot to be happy about, indeed, and a lot to gaze at when the siblings walked in the garden hand in hand.

One day the king was on a ride in the city with his daughter when suddenly a strong wind blew in through the carriage window and the princess was gone. The king, baffled, looked everywhere, but his sweet girl was nowhere to be found. He sent his servants to look for her all over the country. They sought and searched, but it was as hopeless as looking for a needle in a haystack. That's when the poor king surrendered to his grief and tears.

"Oh, father!" said his son with a heavy heart. "Stop your grieving! Don't lose hope! I'll go looking for my sister myself, I'm sure I'll find her somewhere!"

The king gave his son his blessing, armed him and sent him off on his journey. The prince walked over hills and valleys, calling his sister's name, asking people on the road, but there was no sign of the young princess anywhere. As he was travelling the world, far and wide, he reached a lake with a flock of ducks splashing about near the shore. He took out his rifle and aimed it at the biggest duck.

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“Oi, lad, oi! Don’t shoot at me, I can be of great help to you one day!” shouted the duck at him. “I know where you are heading. You’re going the right way! Your sister’s being held in the Palace of the Wind.”

The prince was stunned. He put the rifle back on his shoulder and continued on his way. Soon he arrived at a large anthill in the middle of the road. He stopped and poked it with a stick. The ants swarmed around, then a big ant with wings appeared and said: “Don’t crash my palace, kind sir. Go around it on the right, and I can be of great help to you one day.”

The prince had to laugh at the remark, but he let the anthill be anyway. He went on until he found himself in a dense thicket. Entangled in the bushes, he couldn’t find a way out. Finally, he found a place he could squeeze through, but there was a dead trunk full of bees blocking the way. The prince took out his sabre to cut the tree down. But just as he cut once into the wood, the bee queen flew out and spoke to him: “Don’t cut my house down, good sir! Go around it on the right and I can be of great help to you one day!”

He listened to her plea, passed the trunk and went on, clearing the way in front of him.

When he cut through the last bushes, a towering palace standing on a bare hill appeared in front of him.

“Oh, thank god, I’m finally here!” rejoiced the prince and continued to the foot of the hill. Then the real trouble started. The wind blowing on the hill was so powerful, the boy had to get down on his hands and knees and crawl on all fours all the way up to the palace. When he finally reached it, he banged on the gate, but no one answered. He entered the first room, the second room, but he didn’t find a living soul. Only in the third room did he run into that brother-in-law of his, the king of the wind himself, who was leaning out of the window and whistling. When he noticed the prince, he stopped and greeted him: “Welcome, brother, welcome!”

But the prince didn’t pay heed to his empty talk and demanded to get his sister back at once.

“You do have brains, I will give you that, my little brother!” said the wind king.

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“But not so fast! You’re in my power now.”

He carried the prince to the seashore, then took off his ring and threw it into the waves.

“If you can find the ring before sunrise, you’ll get your sister back,” said the king. “If not, you’ll go back where you came from.”

The poor prince was petrified. He couldn’t even move his lips how scared he was. The king of the wind just laughed, told him he would be back in the morning and then disappeared.

The desperate boy walked along the shore, not knowing what to do. Suddenly a duck flew to him and said: “Well, friend, you gave me my life, so stop worrying, go to sleep and I’ll get that ring for you.”

When the lad woke up at dawn, the ring was already on his finger. He was overjoyed. Soon the king arrived: “Well, don’t keep me in suspense! Do you have the ring?”

“See for yourself!” said the prince and showed him the ring.

“Fine, but you haven’t won just yet. Come with me, dear brother,” replied the king and took him to the highest tower in the palace. He brought a bag of poppy seeds with him and poured it out of the window, scattering the tiny seeds in the wind.

“If you can collect all those poppy seeds and bring them back to me before dawn, I’ll let you and your sister go.”

The prince sighed and sadly watched the seeds fly far away. Suddenly a winged ant appeared next to him and said: “Don’t worry, friend, go get some rest. Leave the task to us ants, we’ll be finished by morning.”

The boy went to bed relieved and full of hope. When the king came back in the morning, the ants had already brought the bag with the seeds up to the tower. They found every single one of them.

“Very well, dear brother. If you’re so capable, have that sister of yours back! You just have to tell which one is the right one,” said the king.

“What kind of a brother wouldn’t recognise his own sister?” thought the prince.

“Well, bring it on!”

The king led him to a room with twelve maidens. Each and every one of them

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was the spitting image of his sister. All twelve of them smiled at him and said: “Welcome, dear brother, welcome!”

The prince almost fainted. The girls looked exactly the same, to the last curl in their hair. He was lost. While he was brooding over this, a bee buzzed next to his ear and whispered: “Don’t worry, friend! The one I’ll sit on will be your sister.”

He watched, relieved, as the bee flew to one of the girls. Then he walked to that girl and hugged her.

“This one is my sister.”

“She is, indeed,” gasped the king of the wind. “Well then. Take her and be on your way!”

Together at last, the brother and sister merrily set off back to their mournful father. How happy he was to see his children hand in hand once again! And how happy was the whole world to have its beautiful pair of siblings back.