



## THE THREE GOLDEN HAIRS

Long ago, even before your grandparents were born, there was a land named Fairyland. It was a magical land, of course, inhabited by fairies who were called the Fates. Every time a child was born, three Fates would visit and use their power to bestow a strength or a task upon the child. Those three Fates would then stay with the child forever and guide him through his life. The most famous Fates were Lia, Mia and Via, and this is their story.

“Look at those lovely cheeks! And those beautiful green eyes!”

“He looks like a prince!”

A little boy had just been born to a coalman and his wife in a small shack in the woods, and the Fates loved him already. The parents were overjoyed that their child was so healthy and beautiful. The Fates took the boy by his hands and told him his fate.

The oldest Fate, Lia, began, “My dear boy, you will do great things, but you will also run into a lot of danger in your life.”

“I give you the strength to overcome all obstacles,” said Mia.

“And I,” said Via, the youngest and silliest of them, “want you to marry a king’s daughter.”

Then they drew a magic circle around the boy and powdered him with a

## THE THREE GOLDEN HAIRS

memory-wiping powder. But just as they were telling the boy his fate, the king was passing by the house and overheard the words of the youngest Fate, floating out of the house like music. His little daughter, a princess, had been born that very day!

“I can’t let my daughter marry some simple peasant!” raged the king. And so he waited until the middle of the night, snuck into the coalman’s house, and stole the baby away.

When he brought the boy back to his castle, he ordered his most faithful servant to put the child in a basket and send him down the river. The servant felt sorry for the child, but he was too afraid of the king to argue, and so he took the baby from the king and pushed him out onto the raging river.

Mia and Via were very angry with the king. Only Lia was content; the little boy was already going through the first dangerous adventure of his life, just as she had predicted. The river was fast and carried the basket carrying the crying boy far, far away. Mia was beside herself.

“I must save him!” she thought. She took some magic powder and threw a little bit in the air. The river calmed down and the boy gently floated all the way to the house of a kind fisherman. His wife was drawing water from the river when she saw the basket and heard a child crying. She pulled it out of the stream, saw the baby, and ran home at once.

“A miracle has happened!” she told her husband.

“That’s wonderful, my love! We will finally have a child!” the fisherman exclaimed. From that moment, they raised the little boy as if he were their own. They loved him as much as any parents could love a child and taught him everything there was to know about the fisherman’s craft.

Years passed, and one day Via went to check on the boy. He was a handsome young man now, but he was wet and dirty after a long day on the river, and she shook her head and laughed affectionately.

“Oh, my boy, no princess is going to want you like this. I’ll fix it.” Via scattered magic powder over the boy and suddenly he wanted to take better care of himself.

“Mum, can you hand me the brush, please?” he said, one night.

## THE THREE GOLDEN HAIRS

“A brush? What for? You never brush your hair!” his mother said.

“What do you mean, ‘never’? I always brush my hair!” he responded, stubbornly. He started combing out his tangled locks, but the comb got snagged and he yelled. “Ouch! It hurts mum, please, help me!” he cried.

The fates once again scattered a little magic powder, and the king found himself passing by the fisherman’s shack. He heard the yelling young and went straight to the fisherman’s house.

“Good day. What in the world was all that screaming about?” asked the king.

The young man and his mum were struck completely speechless when they saw the king himself standing in their door.

“W-what honour brings you to us, good sir?” asked the mother, and she curtsied awkwardly. She had never met a king before!

“I heard yelling. But I see that everything is just fine. You look strong, lad! Is he yours?” the king asked the fisherman’s wife.

“He is, or, well, not quite. The river brought him to us twenty years ago. He’s been our son since that day.”

The king realised suddenly that this was the boy who was meant to marry his daughter and he quickly devised a new plan. He took a piece of paper and wrote: This boy is to be executed as soon as he enters the castle.

He folded it, stamped it with the royal seal, and turned to the boy: “Son, I must be on my way. I cannot spare a guard currently, but I need this note to be delivered to the queen. Can you bring it to her for me?” Then he bid them all farewell and left. An order was an order. The young man packed his things, said goodbye to his parents and left for the royal palace.

The journey began smoothly, and he walked along, happily listening to the singing birds and rustling leaves.

“Let’s spice this up a little,” Lia said, and summoned a terrible storm.

“Would you stop it already?” Mia shouted.

“No, you stop it! All you do is help him all the time. He has to learn how to take care of himself!” Lia said.

Meanwhile, Via flew in circles, trying to find a way to save the boy from the

## THE THREE GOLDEN HAIRS

execution so he could fulfil the prophecy and marry the king's daughter. As he passed an old shack, she found inspiration - and poof! She started doing magic. Quickly, she transformed into an old lady and walked out of the woods to talk to the boy.

"Good evening, lad. Where are you going this late at night?" she asked.

"I'm carrying an important letter to the queen."

"A noble journey! But it's not safe outside this late at night, my dear boy! Come into my shack, you can have a bite to eat and get some rest. You can continue your journey in the morning."

"Well...very well then," he agreed. It had been a long day and he was very tired, and he fell asleep quickly.

Once he was sleeping, Via took the king's letter and replaced it with a new one that said: My queen, as soon as this boy enters the castle, he must marry our daughter. He is a very good man.

Two days later, the boy arrived safely at the royal palace. The queen was shocked to read the note, but she trusted her husband and introduced the handsome young man to her daughter. The princess liked him immediately, so the queen began to arrange a beautiful wedding.

Everyone was wonderfully happy until the king returned. He was furious when he found out what had happened, and got into a terrible fight with the queen.

"How could you do this? He's nobody, he's a peasant!" he shouted.

"But you asked for it yourself!" protested the queen, and she handed him his letter.

It was his handwriting, indeed, but the words were wrong.

The king wasn't going to accept this easily, but now that his daughter loved the boy he couldn't have him executed. He went to the boy, who was now a prince, and said: "To prove to me that you're worthy of my daughter, I want you to bring me three golden hairs from Grandfather Knowall."

The boy was happy to prove himself and the next day set out on his quest.

"Ah, finally! Now my prophecy will come true!" said Lia excitedly.

"Don't you dare hurt him," Mia said. Sometimes she sometimes doubted whether

## THE THREE GOLDEN HAIRS

Lia was actually a good fairy.

The boy walked for a day and a night, until he reached the wide shores of a giant lake. There he met a ferryman who offered to take him to the other side.

“Where are you headed, boy?” asked the ferryman once they embarked.

“I am going to see Grandfather Knowall. I need three of his hairs.”

“Oh, you must be very brave, indeed!” the ferryman said. “Nobody has ever dared go there before. If you find him, can you ask him what I should do to escape this drudgery? I’ve been a ferryman all my life, but I’m not as strong as I used to be.”

“I would be happy to ask him,” the prince said.

When he got off the boat, he found himself in a strange city. As he roamed the streets, he noticed that all the people he met were quite old. After some time, he bumped into their king himself.

“Who are you, lad? I’ve never seen you here before.”

“Good day, your majesty. I’m a prince from the other shore. I’m looking for Grandfather Knowall.”

The king was surprised. “Nobody has ever dared to go there before. I wish you all the luck. If you succeed, can you ask him something for me? We have an ancient apple tree here. Its apples used to keep us young, but years ago it stopped bearing fruit. Can you ask him what I can do about it?”

“I would be happy to ask him,” the prince said.

He continued on his path, until he reached another city where only sick people lived. He met their queen, who said, “Welcome, young man. What brings you to our city?”

“I’m looking for Grandfather Knowall, Your Majesty.”

The queen was amazed. “You must be truly courageous! If you find him, can you ask him something for me? We have a magical well here. In the past, whoever drank from it was instantly cured of all that ailed them. But lately, there is no water in the well. We don’t know what to do! Please, will you help us?”

“I would be happy to,” said the lad, and he headed towards and over the mountains. The end of his journey was getting closer and closer and his fairies were starting to worry. Finally, the prince came to a towering palace. It was so bright and

## THE THREE GOLDEN HAIRS

radiant his human eyes could barely stand to look at it. When he entered, the door creaked and shut behind him and a kind old woman approached him.

“Hello, young man.”

“Hello. I’m looking for Grandfather Knowall,” the prince said.

The old woman gave him a long look, as though she were reading him like a sign.

“Well I see there is no evil in you. Come in. What do you need from him?” she asked.

“I need three of his golden hairs and three pieces of advice.”

The boy explained everything to her about the quest set to him by his father-in-law and the three questions he had been asked on his journey. After he finished, she nodded thoughtfully.

“Well, I will help you. You’re going to have to hide, though, because Grandfather Knowall doesn’t like having mortals in the house so we can’t have him finding you.”

She hid him in a barrel, and he sat there for what felt like a long, long time. When Knowall returned home, he told the old woman: “Good evening, mother dear. I am so tired! You wouldn’t believe how much heat the humans wanted today.”

Suddenly, the prince understood who Grandfather Knowall was and why his house was so bright: he was the sun himself!

An hour later, the exhausted Knowall lay down on his bed and fell asleep. Quietly, his mother sat by him and pulled out one of his hairs.

“Ouch! What did you do that for?”

“Oh, you see, I was having a dream. There was a city with a well that used to give healing water, but now it’s dried up and I can’t understand why,” she said.

“That’s because there’s an old toad inside it, drinking all the water. If they take the toad out, the well will fill up again,” answered Knowall, yawning.

When he started snoring again, the woman pulled out another hair.

“Ouch, you did it again!”

“I’m sorry, honey. I had another dream... There was a city with an apple tree that used to turn people young, but it stopped giving any apples and everyone was terribly old.

## THE THREE GOLDEN HAIRS

“There’s a snake under the tree,” he mumbled. “They just need to dig the tree out and plant it somewhere else.”

Soon the woman pulled a third hair from Knowall’s head. This time he started to get really angry, but his mother quickly said: “I dreamed there was a ferryman somewhere on the sea. He spent his whole life carrying people over, but he can’t do it anymore.”

“Oh, he’s a fool. As soon as he can, he should just shove his oars into someone else’s hands. Please, mother, will you let me sleep now?” She nodded, kissed him on the head, and quickly left.

Knowall left the palace early the next morning, and the old woman gave the prince the three golden hairs. He thanked her profusely for her help and headed home, stopping in both cities on his way back to tell them what Knowall had said. The queen was joyous and gave him seven of her best horses, and the king was so grateful he gave him as much gold as the young man could carry. When he finally came to the ferryman, the old man asked him: “So you found him! What did he tell you?”

The prince paused for a moment and then said: “I’ll tell you once you’ve taken me to the other side, if that’s okay.”

When they reached the other side, he unloaded his horse and told the ferryman what Knowall had said, being sure to leave swiftly after so the old man wouldn’t have a chance to pass the oars to him.

When he finally returned home and his father-in-law saw that the young man had not only succeeded in his quest but returned with seven steeds and a pile of gold, he admitted the boy was truly a good match for his daughter.

The prince and his princess brought the fisherman and his wife to live with them in the castle and, later, he found his birth parents as well. Lia, Mia and Via had finally finished what they had foretold, and, content to know that he could take care of himself, they watched him happily from Fairyland, playing merry tunes on their flutes, and never had to meddle in his life again.

Over the years, they’ve cared for many children all over the world and guided them through life. Perhaps they’re even guiding you now...