

## The Three Princes

ONCE UPON A TIME, there lived a princess. She was beginning to come of the age where she might want to marry, and her father, the king, was determined to find a prince for her.

He called for the princes from nearby kingdoms to meet with her, but each one was worse than the next! One of them was very rude and bossy, another one was vain and self-centered, and the third had terrible hygiene.

"Father, I beg you. I cannot marry any of them!" she pleaded.

Her father didn't want his daughter to be unhappy, but he also wanted to stay on good terms with the other kingdoms. He sighed a long and heavy sigh. "Let me think it over," he said. "Ask me again tomorrow night."

The next day, he called the princes to his chambers. "You three are perfect for my daughter," he said. "However, she is not as impressed. Let's give her some time to think about her decision. In the meantime, I have an assignment—each of you must go on a journey for one year. Whoever returns with the most incredible item will win my daughter's hand in marriage."

The three men set out on their trip. After walking together for a week, they came to a fork in the road.

"Well, gentlemen, it is here we must part ways," said the bossy prince. "Hey, I have an idea..." he continued. "One week before we have to go back, let's meet up here and compare our prizes."

And the three continued on their ways. As they had planned, a year later

they met again at the same fork.

"Well now, let's see," said the vain prince to the bossy prince. "What did you find?"

"A crystal ball," he said, removing it from his pack. "It shows you anything that's happening anywhere in the world."

The other two were impressed, but didn't want to show it. "Why, what did you get?" said the bossy prince to the vain one.

The vain prince held a rolled-up carpet under his arm. "A magic carpet. Just sit on it, and you will be transported anywhere you want to go, in a matter of seconds."

"Well, I found this little vial of magic potion," said the messy prince. "Just a drop of it will cure any illness, no matter how bad. If it's given to you by your true love, it can even make the user young again."

"Hand me that crystal ball," said the vain prince. "Let's see how our princess is doing."

He waved his hand over the crystal ball. Soon she appeared, lying in bed; the royal doctor at her side. "Is there anything you can do to help her?" pleaded the king. The doctor looked at him solemnly. "We've done all we can. I'm sorry, but there's no more we can do."

The princes were shocked. "I have just the thing!" said the messy prince, jumping up. "My magic potion will heal her, but how shall we get there in time?"

"Quick, climb aboard the magic carpet," said the vain prince, and all three did.

As promised, they arrived at the palace quickly. The messy prince rushed to

her side and drizzled the magic potion on her lips. Suddenly, she blinked, then sat right up in bed. "Why, I feel incredible!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, thank you!" cried the king.

Later, while the princess was recovering, the three princes went to the king. "Your majesty," said the bossy prince. "We have done what you asked. Each of us has brought back a magical trinket from our travels, each incredible in their own right. Still, it should be noted that my crystal ball is the most wondrous item of them all. Without it, we would have never even known that the princess was ill."

"Ahem," said the messy prince.

"Without my magic carpet, we would never have arrived in time to save her."

"I beg your pardon!" cried the vain prince. "Without my magic potion, we wouldn't have been able to save her at all!"

"Gentlemen, please," said the king.

"I will need some time to think about this. Come back tomorrow when I have a clear head."

That evening, the king met with his assistants. "Your majesty," said one, "I know of a very wise man who could help you. Shall I call for him?"

"Excellent idea," said the king.

"Bring him here tomorrow."

The next day, the king and the three princes met with the wise man. He was a wrinkled old man, who had a hunch in his back and walked with a cane. "Each of these fine young men has proved their worth as a suitor," said the king. "Which one do you think is best for her?"

The visitor looked at the three princes. "Each of you completed the task assigned to you," began the wise man. "But where I come from, the decision to marry should be made between both the husband and wife, and it seems none of you have asked the princess' opinion." He turned to the princess. "Young lady, whom do you wish to marry?"

"None of them!" cried the princess.

"All three of them saved my life, and for that I am grateful. But of all the men in this room I am grateful for, I am most appreciative of the wise man. He understands that I shouldn't be given away like cattle. If I were to marry anyone in this room, I would choose him."

She took the magic potion from the vain prince and placed it in the old man's hands. He drank it, and soon he became a young, handsome prince. The two were swiftly wed, and they lived happily ever after.

## THINK ABOUT IT

**Imagine you are the king in this story. Write a letter to the wise man explaining the situation you are in and how he can help you. Use a separate sheet of paper!**