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## The Lily Maiden

Once upon a time there was a kindhearted king who was loved by people of all ranks and all types so much so that they would give their lives for the king. The king didn't have a wife, and his subjects wished him to marry, so he would raise a kindhearted successor to the throne. The thought of getting married stuck a chord with the king, and he was mulling over the ways he might find the best wife.

The king had an old advisor, who was a huntsman in the royal forest. While he could have lived in the palace, but he chose to live in a small hut, like a poor man. The king visited the huntsman, and told him what his subject wanted him to do. The huntsman gave the king a rosemary flower, and said: when this rosemary flower bends in front of a maiden, marry her, because she will be the best choice for a wife. The king gathered the maidens of the country into his palace, and ordered his soldiers to spell the name of each maiden out of pearls right in front of them where they were sitting. If the rosemary flower didn't bend in front of any of them, then the maidens got to take home the pearls that spelled out their name. As the maidens took their seats the king walked in front of them, holding the rosemary flower. Low and behold, the rosemary didn't bend in front of any of the maidens. The same thing happened the next day and the third. What am I going to do now, asked the king. How am I going to find my future wife.

As he was pondering that all night, he saw a shadow flying through the window, and landing on the rosemary flower. It was a golden bird who said to the rosemary flower: I owe my life to this king, as he saved me twice from the talons of a falcon. I could finally repay my debt, and I would like to lead him to the maiden whom he is seeking. She is in a fairy castle, and I came to tell you that tomorrow guide the king out of the palace, and just follow me, as I'll be flying overhead. The king could barely go to sleep, he could hardly wait till the morning.

In the morning they started on their journey, and they came up on a limping, groaning stallion. What's wrong with you? the king asked the stallion. An old witch shot me with an arrow, so she can bewitch my rider. I had that arrow stuck in my side for a while, and I haven't found anyone who would pull it out, the stallion answered. I'll take care of that, said the king, and he pulled out a silver arrow from the side of the stallion. The stallion reared up, and became beautiful and healthy again. He thanked the king, and then said: I know what you're looking for. She is a long way from here, so hop onto my back, and I'll carry you till you find your future wife. The king jumped on the back of the stallion, and it galloped as fast as lightning; the rosemary flower and the golden bird went with them.

As they were moving over mountains and valleys they came across a castle made of glass, and they heard incredible screaming from the castle. I have to stop to help whoever that is, said the king, and he walked into the glass castle. Low and behold, he saw a man made of glass who was screaming, because a horsefly was flying around in his stomach constantly biting him. Who are you, where are you from, asked the glass man. I'm a king of a faraway land, and I'm on my way to the fairy castle to find my future wife, answered the king. And who would you be, asked the king. I'm the king of this castle, said the glass man. And why are you screaming, asked the king. This horsefly is trying to poke

through my stomach, said the glass man. Can you get rid of it somehow, asked the king. Not until its mother, the giant sword-legged spider, is alive, and as much as I know that spider will live forever, as it can not be killed by any weapon. I had a stallion who could have killed the spider, but the spider shot it with an arrow, said the glass man. Where do I find that giant spider, asked the king. Well, it'll be here any minute, said the glass man. Do you see that glass couch over there? There sits my beloved wife wearing clothes of roses. The spider comes every hour and spins cobweb around her, and when the spider leaves, a thorn bird comes by and strips away the cobweb. Right then there was a clinging sound from the ceiling, and the king saw a giant spider coming down into the room. The king drew his sword and attacked the spider, but it was deflecting all the blows with its sword shaped legs. The spider almost got the better of the king when the stallion jumped into the room, and as broken glass was flying everywhere, the stallion started to kick the giant spider. The horsefly saw that the spider is in danger and tried to fly out the mouth of the glass man. The stallion yelled at the glass man to close his mouth, but it was too late, and the horsefly flew at the stallion. The stallion killed the horsefly with one kick, and killed the spider with another kick.

Now that those creatures were dead the glass man turned into a good looking young man, and his wife on the glass couch turned into a beautiful women, and the roses bloomed right on her clothes. The thorn bird turned into a beautiful girl, and the glass castle turned into a castle of gold. Now the king of the gold castle explained his story:

This castle belonged to my family in time immemorial. Next to the castle there was a little hut where a n old witch lived, and she was trying to fix me up with her daughter for a wife. But I chose a wife from the fairy garden, and the witch got mad after hearing it. She turned me into a glass man, and she turned his daughter into a wasp, so she can torment me from the inside. The witch turned herself into a giant spider and spun cobweb around my wife just to make her ugly. The witch turned our servant into a thorn bird and she kept coming back to undo the cobweb. You pulled the arrow from my stallion, you freed me from my predicament, so tell me how can I repay you for your good deeds. You don't need to repay me, just tell me how do I get to the fairy castle, because that's where my future wife is. Take my stallion, said the king of the gold castle, he will take you there.

In a half hour they arrived at the fairy castle, and they saw that the entire castle was covered in the black color of funeral. What is happening here, asked the king. The fairies told him that the most beautiful fairy was so saddened to hear what the witch did to her sister in the gold castle, that in her grief she turned herself into a white lily. Can you take me to her, asked the king. When the rosemary flower saw the white lily, she bent down in front of it, and the golden bird stood on a branch of the lily. The white lily shook itself, and changed into a beautiful maiden. The king immediately asked her to marry him, and they promised to love each other forever. When they traveled to the gold castle, they celebrated for a few days, and when the arrived back to the castle of the king they threw a huge wedding party, and they might still live unless they died.