

The King Who Hid Beauty in a Box



Written and Illustrated by
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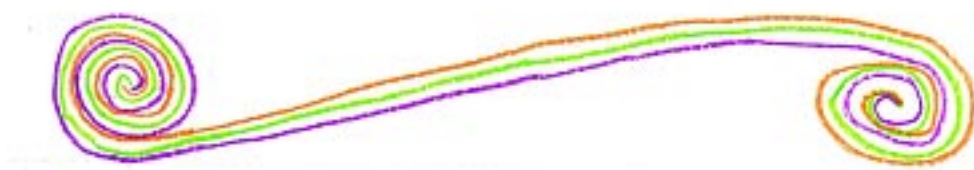
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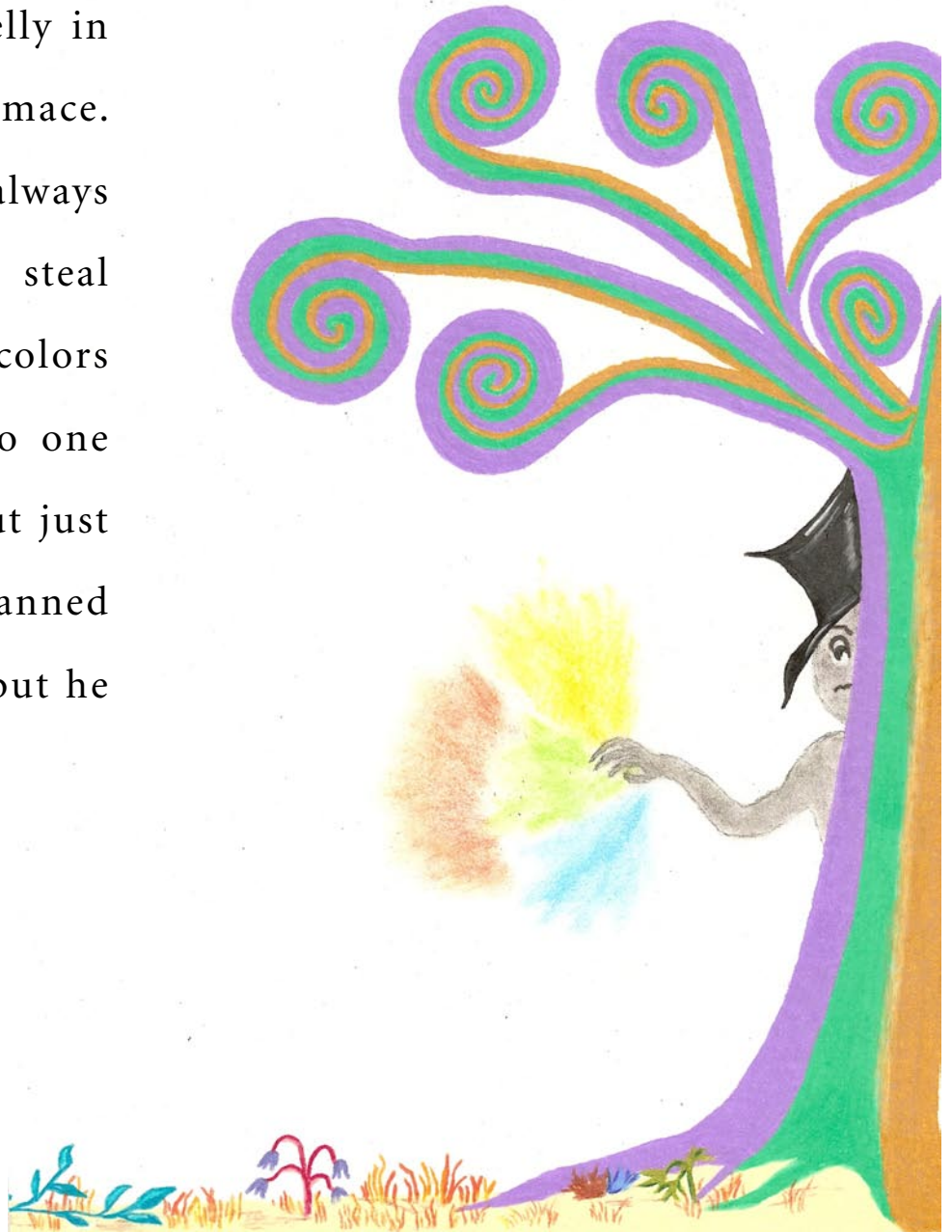
When once there was, there was once a young King. His was the realm called the Kingdom of Kindness. If one could fly high as the pie in the sky, they would see a kingdom rippling with rivers and freckled with forests. Tiny villages were nestled in the meadows. At first glance, it might appear that this was just like any other ordinary kingdom, but it

was far from ordinary. Indeed this was a very special kingdom of everchanging colors.

At the top of an uphill climb in the very heart of this kingdom stood a magnificent castle where the young King lived. Workers scurried about their chores keeping the castle in good running order.



Standing guard over the castle were the King's legion of knights. It was their job to keep a watchful eye on the wicked Gretch of Greedy, lord of the underbelly in the Gulch of Grimace. The Gretch was always plotting ways to steal the everchanging colors in the Kingdom. No one could ever figure out just how the Gretch planned to steal the colors, but he was known to try.



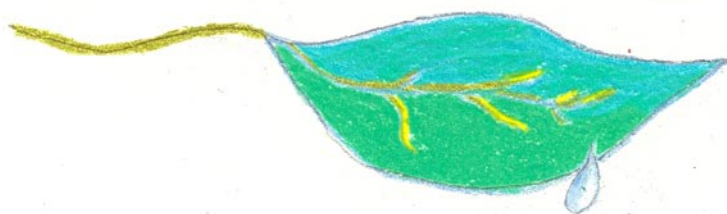
Each day the young King invited the villagers into his castle to hear their complaints. He wanted to keep the kindred folk in a peaceful state of kindness. After he met with the villagers, he held court with his High Council working long hours into the night. Truth be told the young King was too busy to have nary the inklings to notice anything special about his Kingdom.

The things we do and the things we see

Sometimes we miss the specialty

Like secret whispers on a windy breeze

Or sparkling dewdrops on the leaves



Every night, as the sun was slowly spiraling behind the faraway forest trees, the maids delivered an evening snack of warm noddlings and buttery somethings to the King's bedroom chamber. After finishing his snack, it always made him yawn his mouth wide open and stretch his arms up tall. The King removed his royal slip-ons and regal robing to settle down in his cozy bed and drift into a peaceful sleep. He had everything a King could need or so it would seem.



On this night, t'was not more than a mere blink of his closed shut eyelids before the King sat upright in bed startled awake from a very strange dream.

He couldn't sleep so he tossed and turned
He punched his pillow and wriggled and squirmed.
He rose from his bed and paced left and right
He did this throughout this very long night.

It felt like a fistful of forevers before the King saw a sparkle of sunlight slipping in through his bedroom window. The King was grouchy from not enough sleep making such a fuss about every which way and all the little ordinary things. In a royal burst about, he ordered his attendants, "Bring me my royal garments!"

Dressed in fancy coat and velvet knickers,
He put on his boots and heard some snickers.
The attendants had never heard him complain
It surprised them to see him act this way.



Tromping into the great dining hall, he plopped in his chair at the head of his royal table. The once happy King grumbled with his face all scrunched into a squiggly mouth. “Where are my cakes from the pan?” His booming voice bounced off the high ceiling changing all the colors of the castle inside out.

The maids, shivering in their shoes, scrambled off to the kitchen to fetch his morning meal. As the King waited impatiently tapping his fingers on the long dining table, he was suddenly startled by a big puff of colorful smoke. “What is this now?” the King gasped.

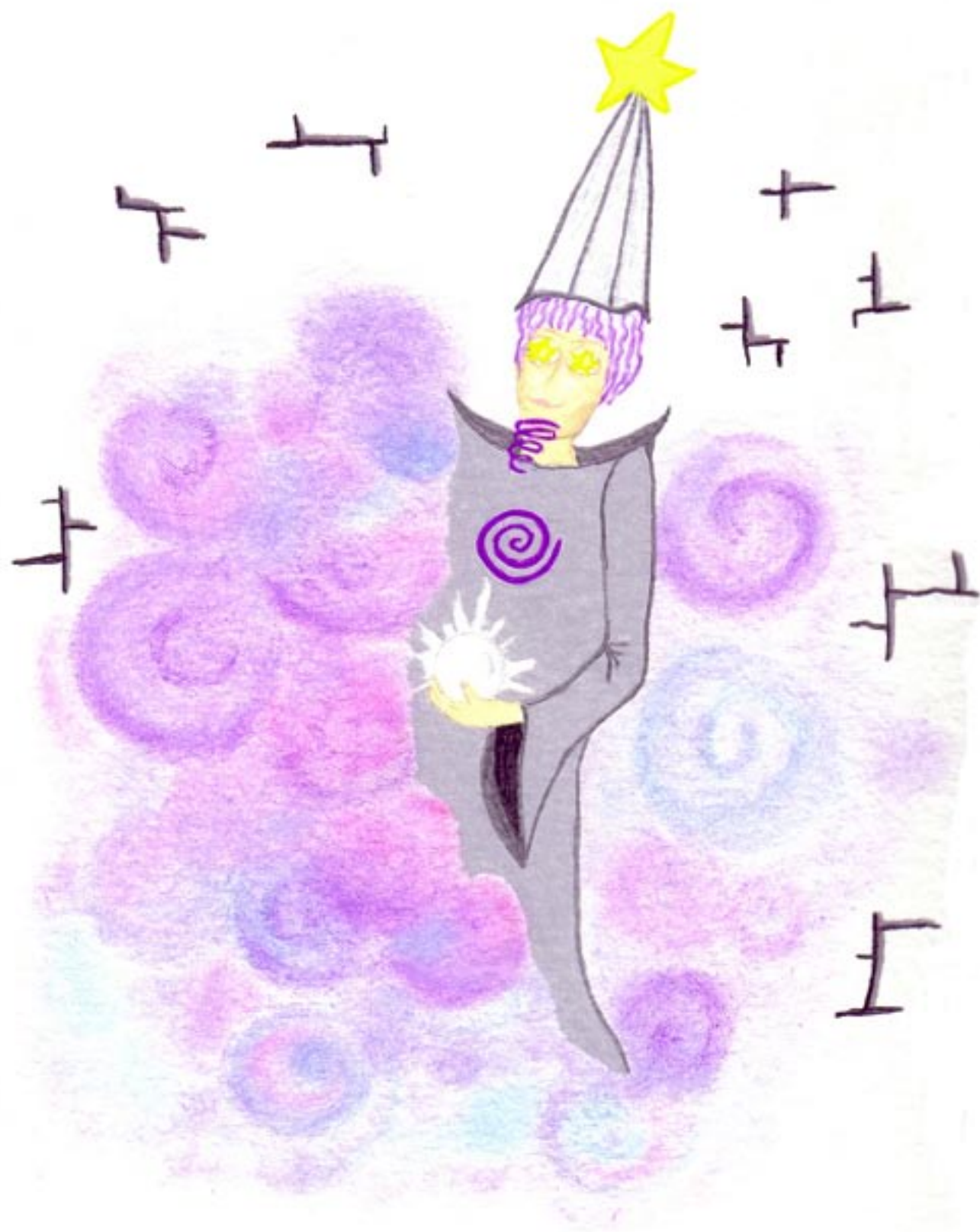
“Fitful dreams in the night, puffs of smoke in the day

Whatever is happening to make it this way?

Flipping the world upside down

Turning my smile into this frown”

When the smoke cleared, the King was surprised to see the majestic Grand Wizard of Wise larger than life itself but not quite as large as his castle. The King had heard about the Wizard from stories of hearsay and tales of tall making. The King rubbed his eyes to make sure he was awake from his dreaming.



The Grand Wizard wore a long silver robe
He held in his hand a clear crystal globe
From his bright starry eyes that told no lies
Anyone could tell he was the Wizard of Wise

“Forgive me for popping in uninvited, but I see that you had a strange dream last night,” said the Grand Wizard. His squiggly beard moved up and down as he talked. By his extraordinary manner of word speak everyone knew that whatever the Grand Wizard said was as true as the grass is blue. No one in the entire Kingdom would argue that the grass was as blue as blue grass is except, of course, when it turned to pink.

Trying to maintain his royal composure, the King sat up straight in his chair but stuttered,

“Uh...You did but an instant sta-startle me.

You are welcome to join me for ca-cakes and tea.

I would welcome your wisdom and wo-words so kind

To tell me the answer of this riddle to find.”

The Grand Wizard of Wise living all the way up to the tallness and importance of his title knew exactly what the answer to the King's riddle was. How else could the Wizard have come by his name lest he earned it by inches of in between and degrees of things that can't really be measured?

The Wizard smiled thoughtfully and said,

"Shadowy dreams in the dark of night

Can sometimes cause such a fright

"Tis just a sign of things to come

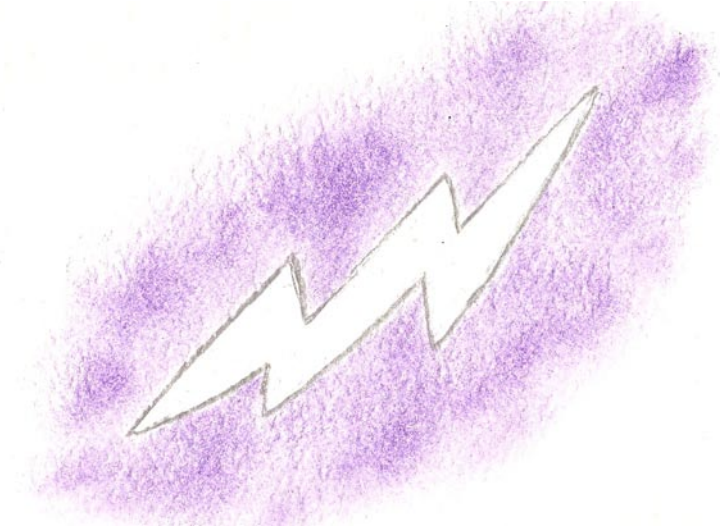
Don't let it make you come all undone"

The kindly King being very polite did not want to offend this Grand Wizard. He swallowed a choke and spoke up to say, "Why do you offer an answer to that which riddles me with even more confusing riddles?"



With a wink of his eye and a nod of his nose, the Wizard reached deep into his timeless satchel. It would seem that by the way this story spirals you would have already guessed that this satchel was no ordinary bag. It quite simply had no bottom. The Grand Wizard of Wise kept reaching and reaching into the satchel until just this side of eventually he pulled out a little wooden box and an odd map. It was indeed odd because it changed direction every time a person thought they knew the way. He handed the gifts to the King and instructed, “You are to go on a journey to the Forest of Forever at the Edge of Dreams in the Land of Believe. You can follow this map to know when you are there or if you are not. Take this box on your journey, and you will know what it is for, when you know what it is for.”

Before the puzzled King could ask any more questions, the Grand Wizard disappeared in a flash.



The King was muddled and bemused
Scratching his head concerned and confused
He called to his courtiers and sent for his maids
Beckoned his knights and hearkened his knaves

Even though the kindly King ruled over his very big kingdom, he now realized that he didn't know everything there was to know about everything there is to know. He told his servants to prepare everything he would need for a long journey.

Out in the courtyard he mounted his royal steed and called for the castle gates to open. He glanced at the odd map to see which way he must go. Holding it upright then sideways and turned round again, the diagrams kept moving every which way. He did not know just where to begin. He decided to ride out across his kingdom. There followed behind him a caravan of horses pulling carts full of supplies and his trusty knights to guard him.



Days and nights and nights and days
Mixed and mingled his way in a maze
Riddles and questions froze in his mind
What was this quest he was off to find?

At the first village they entered, all the people gathered to welcome their royal leader. The men took off their caps and the women bowed in a curtsy. Children jumped for joy at seeing the kindly King with his royal knights and horses. All the villagers thought it must be a holiday to have the King ride through their town. Since not one of the villagers could think of what holiday it might be, they decided to declare it the “Day of Kindness.” For many years to follow, the village had festivals to remember the day the King of Kindness rode through their village. They made fancy cakes from the pan and warm harmony tea, and everyone shared everything.

When the King asked directions to find the Forest of Forever, each villager shrugged their shoulders and shook their heads in the typical manner of someone not really in the know. The King bid the village people farewell and continued on his journey.

Round and round they traveled in endless circles. The very tired King could not remember how long it had been since he slept in his own comfy bed. He was all about to give up hoping and trust of the kind in things that are unseen, when he saw a glimmer of light in the distance. Immediately the King's hopes were lifted high above the far down below places. Calling to his guardsmen, they galloped into the spiraling sundown right to the Edge of Dreams, and there they saw the Forest of Forever. Surely this must be it, for as far as the King could see, it stretched on forever. He looked at the odd map to check. Much to his amazement, the map showed an arrow pointing right towards the forest.



Never hardly ever did the young King go anywhere without his guards, maids or messengers surrounding him. This moment seemed the right moment to do just that. It was then that the King remembered the Grand Wizard's words about knowing when to and what not or some such riddling. With orders to his knights to wait for him, he rode alone on his royal steed into the Forest of Forever.

Deep in the forest he rode along

The wind in the leaves whistled a song

He did not know why or where he was bound

He knew there was something that had to be found

The deeper he rode into the forest, the darker it became. A funny chill came over his spine tingling him up and down the shivers. He sensed an air of mysterious makings about this place. Just as he was about to turn around, he saw the shimmering light under the tall trees. The young King dismounted from his horse and slowly walked toward the shining light. It was coming from underneath a fruity berry bush.



Kneeling down he carefully pushed the branches back, and there he saw a tiny fairy princess fast asleep. This little princess was so radiantly beautiful that it took the King's every breath away and skipped his heart an entire beat to the moon and back again.

She stirred in her sleep snapping the King out of his dreamlike mood. Remembering the small box that the Grand Wizard gave to him, he thought to himself, "This must be what the little box is for!" Swiftly he went to his horse to fetch it and returned to peek under the fruity berry bush again. While reaching out his big hand to carefully pick her up, he scratched his finger on a thorny branch. "Ouch!" he yowled.

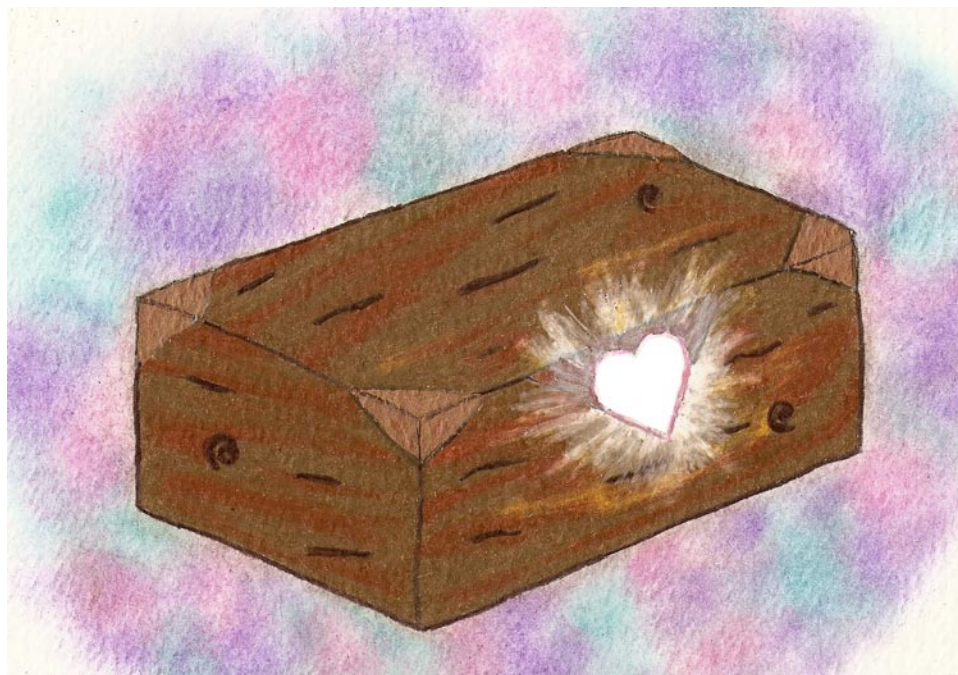
The little Beauty was hardly awake

When she felt the ground under her tremble and shake

She looked straight up with great surprise

As she saw her reflection in a huge pair of eyes

The tiny princess opened her mouth to scream but only a squeak came forth. “Don’t be afraid,” he said. “I am a kindly King, and I will keep you safe from harm.” He placed the little princess in his small box and closed the lid for safekeeping.



Then began the journey back to his magnificent castle, in the heart of his special kingdom on the top of the uphill climb. Traveling back the long way did not take as long as traveling forward in a circling maze, because that is just the way time seems to behave.

When he arrived home, the King hurried up to his chamber and hid the small box with the tiny princess under his bed. He wanted to keep his newfound treasure all to himself. He had much work to catch up to before it caught up to him and so he hurried off to get back to the business of running his kingdom.

*All of the servants and all of the maids
The knights, the courtiers, the cooks and the knaves
Were so glad to see the King smile once more
They didn't care about the why or how for*

When the workaday was over, he rushed quickly to his chamber. As he opened the lid of the box, the tiny princess jumped to her feet shading her eyes from the sudden burst of light from the nearby candle. The kindly King's eyes softened at the sight of her. He said, "I will call you Beauty, for never before have I beheld anything in all of my kingdom as beautiful as you."

The fairy princess quaked in her small slippers. She spoke up in her loudest effort to be heard yet it seemed like such a tiny tinkling sound over the King's loud rumbling voice.



*“It is water I need to wash and drink
I need a tubful or even a sink
When I gaze upon it I shall see
A shining light to reflect beauty”*

The King rushed to the door calling his maids, “Bring me a thimble of water!” They raised their eyebrow in wonder but without questioning the King's command they hurried off to do his bid.

When the maids returned with the thimble, he immediately dismissed them. Being very careful not to spill a single drop, he placed the thimble of water in the box and said, “There my Beauty, see what I have brought you.” Beauty looked at the thimble. It was not enough to see her reflection in. It was not enough to drink and also wash in. Being very thirsty, Beauty drank the entire thimble of water. The King was pleased and said, “Now I have to get some sleep, and you must do the same.” He carefully closed the lid and slid the box back under the bed. Alone again in the dark, Beauty drifted into dreams.

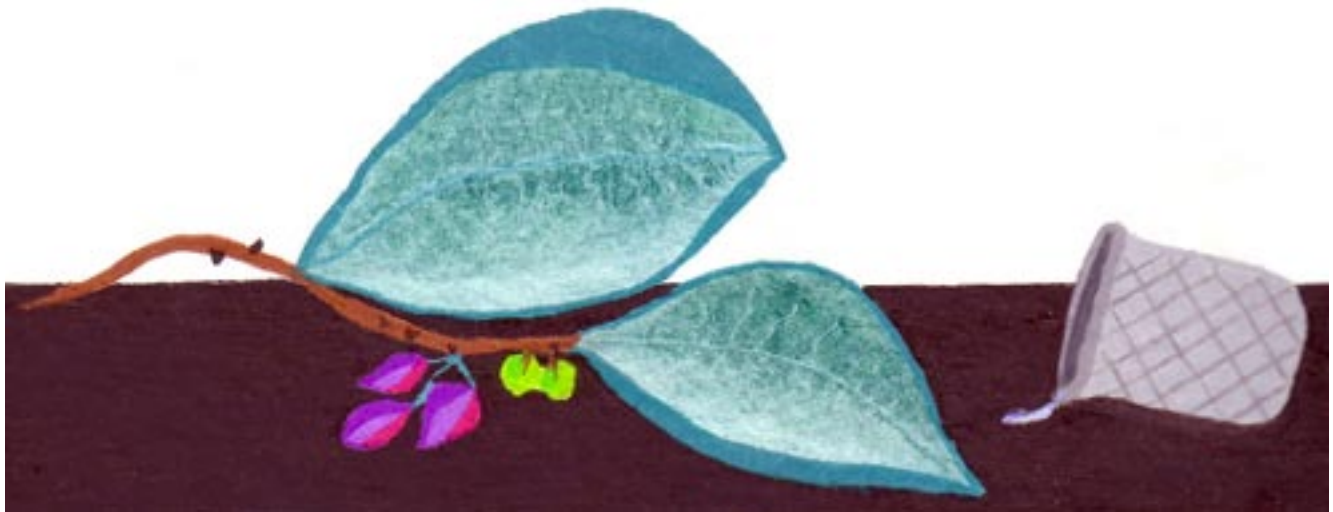
When the morning came, the King rustled himself out from under the covers and unlocked the box. As he lifted the lid, Beauty looked up at the King and pleaded,

“I need something from the earth to eat

Something nutritious and also sweet

Purple like my eyes and my dress of green

It once was where I was first seen”



The King called his knights to fetch him a branch from a fruity berry bush like the one where he found the tiny princess. When they returned with a branch, the King sent them away. He set the branch of berries in the box. “I have a Kingdom to rule, so I will check on you again after my midnight snacking,” he told Beauty. Her tiny voice was muffled as the lid shut over her head leaving her in the darkness once more. There was nothing for her to do but eat the berries and dream of things to be.

Beauty was not sure how many spiraling suns rose and set. Without a window to see as high as the pie in the sky, she could not tell which way was in front from a backward glance. As events have a way of happening even when there is no tell tale measurement, sure enough the lid of the box was lifted once more. The young King saw the twig branch bare of its berries and the empty thimble, but he did not notice that Beauty was fading. Beauty whispered,



“Please, I long for the light of the sun
I need to see when the day is done
To feel the glow and warmth of light
So I can shine my colors bright.”

The King called on his knaves to go in search of a firefly to catch in a jar. By now, there was a buzz of gossiping around the castle. The servants wondered about the King's strange behavior. The knaves returned with the firefly, and the King shut his chamber door. He put the jar in the box with Beauty to give her some light.



Unbeknownst to the King, there was one knave who lingered in the hallway. This knave was in disguise as one of the King's men, but he was



really a spy for the wicked Gretch of Greedy. Peeking through the keyhole, the knave was surprised to see the King peering into his secret box. "Surely there must be treasure in that box," thought the spy, as he rushed off to report this news to the wicked Gretch.

The King once again closed the lid of the box. Beauty sat down on her little thimble, bewildered at why the King kept her locked and hidden in the box. With the little firefly flickering its light, Beauty let out a sad sigh.

“Surely the King is certain to see
That I need to leave this box to be free
I thrive on the earth for food, water and air
I need sunlight to reflect this beauty so rare”

The next day, while the King was meeting with his High Council, a great wind of the disturbing kind rushed into the Great Hall. A messenger hurried in saying that the wicked Gretch of Greedy was sending forces to battle the King. The days have been long and gone and back again that the King had to always reckon with the likes of the Gretch’s mischievous ways. He was a wretched Gretch that had to gobble everything from here to there. The King knew that he must keep the Kingdom peaceful, so he gave orders to his knights and off they scattered in the many directions to defend the Kingdom.



Many suns spiraled over the hills, as the King and his knights stood up to the Gretch at the border between the Kingdom of Kindness and the Gulch of Grimace. The King's knights stood strong in defending the borders with their shields of kindness held high. They did not sling arrows of meanness because they were well trained in the manners of kind ways. The knights knew that whatever mean things the Gretch tossed their way would surely end up in his own back of the yard. Each mud sling of meanness that the Gretch tossed at the shields of kindness bounced back at him filling up the Gulch of Grimace so much that the Gretch and all the spies and color-snatchers got stuck in the mud of their own mean ways.

After the victory, the first thing the King did when he got back to his castle was to check on Beauty. When he opened the box, to his shock he saw the empty thimble turned over. He saw the dried twig with no berries left. He saw the firefly had fainted locked in its jar from not having enough air. Most of all these troublesome things he saw that Beauty was gasping for her last breath. The light of her beauty was almost gone. The gust of fresh air helped Beauty breathe, but because she did not have any water or food or light for a very long time, she was too weak to move.



The King was troubled and did not know how to revive Beauty so he called on the Wizard.

Oh Wizard Grand, Oh Wizard Wise

Please help me to see with open eyes

What have I done, where did I go wrong

How could I have left Beauty alone this long?

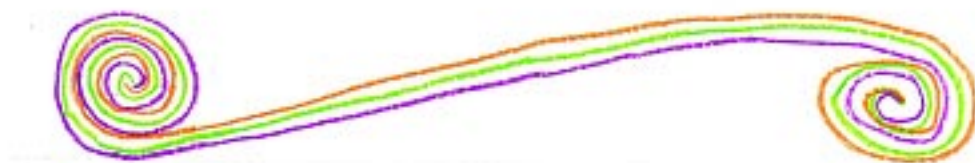
The Grand Wizard appeared again in a flash of light. From the most gentle of wise eyes, the Wizard said, “My words sounded like mysterious riddles, but now you can hear me plainly because you are learning from your own mistake. You were greedy to keep Beauty all to yourself hidden in the box. That is what brought the greedy Gretch to your kingdom to steal her. If you let Beauty out of her box to share her splendor with everyone, then what would there be to steal? Not one person can claim Beauty for their very own and keep her hidden in the dark corners where no one can see. Beauty needs to be shared. Now go and set things aright.”

The King could see that it was his very own greed that made Beauty fade. He took the small box out into his garden and laid the tiny fairy princess under a fruity berry bush just like the one where he found her. He then set about to build a beautiful pool of water and planted more berry bushes. The King saw his reflection in the pool and wondered when it was that he had grown from a young boy into a man. He didn't notice that under the bright light of the sun and the fresh air, Beauty was getting well. She sat up and munched on some berries and then crawled out from under the fruity berry bush. Her weak and shaky little legs barely kept her standing.



Suddenly, the King felt a warm glow surrounding his heart, as he turned to see his little Beauty alive and well. He gently lifted her to the side of the pool where she could see her reflection. She gazed in the reflecting pool and at the very instant of a snap, crackety and pop there was a flash of bright light as Beauty grew into a tall and graceful lady.

Wherever the King and Beauty walked hand in hand, beautiful flowers grew and songs that have never been sung were now heard across the land. The villagers marveled as the ever-changing colors changed into colors no one had ever thought of before. The spiraling sun sparkled higher than the pie in the sky. All the people in the Kingdom celebrated a brand new holiday called “Day of Double Kindness.” Children laughed and danced. Everyone made twice the cakes from the pan and double the harmony tea, and, of course, everyone shared two times as much. From that day forth all the people said many more kind words than the usual, “Good days and happy nights to you and yours.”



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by Sharon Shane

What lesson does the kindly King learn about hiding Beauty away from the Kingdom?

What riddles are posed by the Grand Wizard of Wise to open the King's eyes?

Follow the spiraling suns through the Kingdom of Kindness to find out how the King matches wits with the Wretched Gretch of Greedy and see what adventures the King must go on to find the answers to the Wizard's puzzling riddles.



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