

The Castle Prison

Italy
Europe



COMMISSIONED ART CREATED BY ROWAN NORTH
ROWANNORTHILLUSTRATIONS.ORG



STORY OF THE MONTH - APRIL 2023 - STORY CROSSROADS - STORYCROSSROADS.ORG

When the Queen died, the King mourned. In time, he remarried. Yet, this new Queen spoke terrible things about the King's daughter. Worried by this strain, the King agreed with his new Queen that the daughter was to be sent to another castle. The new Queen volunteered to make the arrangements.

The castle was deep in the forest. Ladies-in-waiting were to live with the Princess and make sure she stayed within that castle. While the room itself was richly furnished, it was still a prison. The room did have a window. The Princess took to sitting by it and looking out.

One day, a Prince hunted wild boar. While the Princess looked down on the trail, she watched the pursuit in interest. The Prince was familiar with this part of the forest and the castle, but he knew it as an abandoned castle. He could see smoke arising from the castle and looked up. While doing so, he saw the Princess at the window. The Prince, the next day, told his father that he would be hunting. Yet, it was only to go back to that castle. The Prince and the Princess stared at each other for perhaps half the day. Nothing more. This all was watched by a witch from behind the bushes. She called the Prince over and said, "You two need to have a way to be together. I give this as a gift."

The Prince watched as the witch headed to the castle. The ladies-in-waiting answered the door. The witch pulled out a thick book. "The Queen wishes for the Princess to continue her studies. Deliver it to her." Without questioning, the ladies-in-waiting delivered it.

When the Princess opened the book, there was a note that said, "Turn the pages forward and one can turn into a canary. Turn the pages backward and one can turn back as human." The Princess rushed to the window, looked at her Prince, and flipped the pages forward. He transformed into a canary and flew to her. She then flipped the pages backwards, and there he was as a Prince. The two delighted to be together. For days, the Princess would flip the pages forwards and backwards. Canary to Prince and from Prince to canary. The Prince would tell his father that he wished to still hunt. Instead, it was to visit with this Princess.

At times, the Queen would visit the Princess. When she looked down from the window, she saw the Prince. She asked the Princess to get her a glass of water. The Princess left the room. While gone, the Queen took six hairpins and placed them upwards and within the pillow near the window. When the Princess returned with the water, the Queen waved it away and left to report to the King that the Princess was in good health. When the Queen left, the Princess returned to the magic book. As the canary landed on the pillow by the window, the hairpins pierced his breast. The Princess saw the blood and flipped the pages backwards, hoping that as a human the Prince would be fine. Yet, no matter as a bird or as human, the wounds were deep. She turned him back into a canary so that at least he could fly down and get help. The Prince's hunting dogs howled and the Prince was rushed to his castle.

The whole kingdom grieved for any day the Prince would die. Meanwhile, the Princess, fraught with worry, took all the sheets and clothes and created a rope to climb down. She had far to travel and found a tree with an opening to fit her perfectly. She heard sounds in the forest. Four witches gathered near her tree. Yet, she was not seen. The four witches bragged of their travels. Finally, one of the witches shared the news of the dying Prince. One of the other witches cackled, "If only they knew of the loose floor tile in the very room the Prince is in. There is a jar of ointment that would cure him." Then, the witches left their separate ways.

The Princess headed to the kingdom. She was able to trade and receive a doctor's jacket and tools. She disguised as a foreign doctor who could cure the Prince. She was welcomed into the Prince's room. She asked everyone to leave the room. When all left, she felt around until she found the loose tile. Finding it, she got the jar and applied the ointment. The Prince awoke. Everyone was summoned inside. The King asked what she wished as a reward. "I only want the Prince's shield with the family coat-of-arms, the standard, and the bloodied vest," she said. It was done. The Princess left and climbed back into her tower. Eventually, the Princess saw the Prince below. She thought it strange that he would not look at her. She flipped the pages of the book forward. He became a canary and still flew to the window despite being reluctant. When he became human, the Prince said, "I almost did not come. Why did you plant those hairpins and wound me?" "That would be my stepmother!" The Princess explained from the beginning. She finally said, "And I was the one who saved you." "No," said the Prince. "It was a foreign doctor."

At this, the Princess showed the Prince's shield with the family coat-of-arms, the standard, and the bloodied vest. The Princess and Prince kissed. The Prince told his father that he would only marry the woman who saved him. Invitations were sent out. The father of the Princess attended. He was surprised when his own daughter was marrying the Prince. All was shared. The King took his Queen, the stepmother, and had justice satisfied. The marriage continued and the Prince and the Princess celebrated. Balance had returned.

