

Prince Pengar & the Genie

Once upon a time there was a king of Persia who had one son, called Prince Pengar. The old king died, and as Prince Pengar was still young, his mother ruled over the kingdom.

The young Prince was very kind-hearted and he gave a great deal away to the poor. Sometimes his mother reproved him for his generosity, but he always said:

“Oh Mother, why are you so uneasy? We are rich and will always have plenty.”

However, the little prince was so generous that at last he gave away all they had, and he and his mother became very poor.

One night Prince Pengar was asleep, and he dreamt that a genie came to him. The genie told him to go to a certain place, to lift up a large stone that he would find there, and to dig up the treasure that lay beneath.

The next morning Prince Pengar ran to his mother, and told her what the genie had said.

“Unfortunately, it was only a dream, my son,” said the Queen.

“Dream or not, I will do what the genie told me,” said Prince Pengar. “Then we will be rich again, and can give our wealth away to the poor.”

So the prince went with a party of men to the place described by the genie. They lifted up the stone, and dug beneath it, but there was no treasure to be found. They returned home, weary and disappointed.

“We could not find the treasure,” Pengar said to his mother.

“What did I tell you, my son?” said the Queen. “This is what happens to those who believe in dreams.”

The next night the genie came to the Prince again, and told him to go to a room in the palace which he had never entered. There he would find a great stone, beneath which was an immense store of treasure, which his father had hidden there.

The next morning Prince Pengar told his dream to his mother.

“It is just another dream, my poor child,” said the Queen.

“All the same, I will do what it says,” said Prince Pengar.

He went with a party of men to the room, and lifted up the great stone. They dug beneath it and at last they uncovered a stone staircase, leading to a cavern beneath the palace. They went down into the cavern, and came to a room in which there stood eight beautiful marble statues, on eight pedestals. Round about them were piles of gold, silver, diamonds, jewellery and ornaments.

There was also a ninth pedestal, but on this there was no statue. A little chest, with the key in the lock, stood beside the empty pedestal. Prince Pengar opened it and took out a letter. The letter told him that whoever could find the ninth statue, and place it on its pedestal, would become the owner of all the treasure in the room, and would never want for anything so long as they lived. The letter also said that first of all, he should go to a wise hermit who lived in the wood, and who would tell him what to do.

When the Prince had read the letter, he went back to his mother and told her all he had seen.

“I know this hermit,” she said. “He was a great friend of your father’s. He is certainly very wise, but I do not think you should go to him. I do not quite trust him.”

However, Prince Pengar was determined to visit the hermit, and he set out accompanied by one attendant.

They entered the forest, and soon came to the old man’s hermitage. The hermit came out to see them, but he did not recognise the Prince.

“I am Prince Pengar,” said the young man. “I am the son of the King of Persia, and I have heard that you used to be his friend and advisor.”

“Indeed I was,” said the hermit. “How can I help you?”

Prince Pengar told him about the genie and his dream, and the room full of treasure, and he explained that he could only claim it when he had found a statue to fill the ninth pedestal.

“Here is the letter I found in the little chest,” he said. “It tells me to come to you, and ask your advice.”

The hermit took the letter, and immediately saw that it was in the handwriting of his old friend, the Prince’s father.

“Yes,” he said, “I know what all this means. I will come with you to the genie, for only he can tell us how to find the ninth statue. I know him very well. We once had a battle of wits and skill together, and I won from him as much land in his kingdom as can be covered by the lid of a barrel. This is why I can enter his kingdom unharmed. I merely set down my barrel lid,

and so long as I do not step off it I am quite safe. We will both stand upon it, and he will be forced to bring us the ninth statue, for this is another of the conditions he agreed to when I defeated him.”

They set off together through the air, thanks to the magical powers of the hermit, and soon came to the edge of the genie’s kingdom.

The hermit threw the barrel top onto the ground, and he and the Prince stepped onto it. Almost immediately the genie arrived, and invited them to come to his palace, where he could give them a proper welcome.

“Oh no,” said the hermit. “We will not leave this circle, where, as you well know, we have every right to be, until you bring us the ninth statue, belonging to the ninth pedestal in the King of Persia’s treasure room.”

“With all my heart,” said the genie, “but first you must find a maiden who has not only never done any wrong, but has never even thought of doing so.”

“Where shall we find such a wonder?” said the hermit.

“Take this looking-glass,” said the genie. “Give it to all the maidens in Persia, and if you find one whose breath does not tarnish the glass, bring her to me, and I will take care of the rest.”



The hermit took the looking glass from the genie and they returned by the way they had come.

When he got home, Prince Pengar announced throughout the kingdom that he wished to marry, and that all the maidens were to come to the palace.

Soon a crowd of girls arrived, some rich, some poor, some ugly, some beautiful, for all were invited.

When they arrived, each maiden was told to look into the looking glass, and to breathe upon it.

No one, be they ever so beautiful or rich, could do so without tarnishing the glass, and Prince Pengar began to despair, for almost every maiden had been tested, and none had succeeded. At last, someone told him of two sisters, who were living in great seclusion in a little village. They were young, and rich, and beautiful, and they had not, as yet, come to the palace.

Prince Pengar gave orders for them to be brought and they soon arrived at the court. The two sisters were certainly very beautiful, and they were also very shy, for they had never been into the world before.

First the elder sister was given the looking glass. She breathed upon it, and tarnished it ever so faintly, but much



less so than the other girls. Next it was given to the younger sister. She also breathed upon it, but her breath did not leave the faintest mark.

“At last!” cried the Prince. “This is she whom I have been seeking, and no one else shall be my wife.”

He and the hermit returned to the genie, and showed him the maiden they had brought with them.

“Yes,” said the genie. “This is the wise and pure-hearted beauty that you had to find. Now, give her to me and return to your palace. Go down into the treasure room, and you will find the ninth statue on the ninth pedestal. Prince Pengar will thus have fulfilled all the conditions, and will be able to enjoy the vast wealth amassed by his father.”

The Prince did not want to give the maiden to the genie, but the hermit assured him that all would be well, and they returned together to the palace.

They entered the underground cavern, and saw the eight statues as before. Upon the ninth pedestal stood a shape that looked something like a woman, wrapped in a long, thick veil. The hermit told the Prince to pull off the veil, and when he did so, he saw to his joy that the pure-hearted maiden stood beneath, dressed in all the finery of a bride. He gave her his hand, and she smiled at him, and stepped down off the pedestal. The Prince presented the maiden to his mother, and the betrothal was celebrated immediately.

The wedding took place eight days later, and there was much public rejoicing, and many festivities, to which both the poor and the rich were invited.

The genie and the hermit were also there, and they forgave each other, and became friends once again.

The hermit even gave up the circle of land which he had won from the genie, as a token of thanks for all he had done for Prince Pengar.

Told by Marguerite Philippe