



THE SORCERER'S THREE BELTS

Once upon a time there lived a king who had an only son. One day he called the young man to him.

“My son, it is time for you to take a wife,” he said. “Go to the turret at the other end of the castle and open the door with the golden lock. You will find a throne room with as many windows as there are days in the year. Beside each window stands a maiden. You must choose one of these to be your wife. Here is the key to the room.”

The Prince hurried up the stairs and entered the throne room. It was full of girls, all beautiful and all magnificently dressed. The Prince bowed to each one and looked for a long time into her face, but each time he walked on with the words, “No, she is not for me.”

He was about to leave the room when he saw a maiden standing half-hidden in a corner. He raised the thick veil that covered her, and gazed with wonder at her beauty.

“I choose you to be my wife,” he said.

“Alas, young man, I cannot wed whom I please,” said the maiden. “I belong to a cruel Enchanter. Whoever wishes to win my hand must pass three tests. All who fail are turned to stone.”

“A king’s son will succeed where others have failed,” said the Prince. “I will not change my choice.”

The King and the Queen and all the courtiers pleaded with the young man, but to no avail. He was determined to defeat the Enchanter.

Soon he set forth for the Enchanter’s castle. It lay on the other side of a great forest, and the Prince lost his way. He wandered on for some time, until he saw a huge man sitting at the foot of a tree.

“I am lost,” said the Prince. “Do you know the way out of this forest?”

The man arose, and began to uncoil upwards like a spring. Soon his head was above the tops of the trees.

“The edge of the forest is a few stone’s throws from here,” he said.

The Prince was filled with amazement, for he had never seen such a man in his life.

“Would you like to come with me on my travels?” he asked.

"Gladly," said the giant. "I am looking for adventure."

"What is your name?"

"My name is Hir (*Long*)."

They had only gone on a few steps when they heard the sound of snoring. A man with a belly as round as a barrel was lying asleep on the grass.

"What are you doing there?" said the Prince.

"I am waiting for a master who will employ me to do difficult work."

"What is your name?"

"My name is Ledan (*Wide*)."

"What can you do?"

The man took a deep breath, and the air rushed into him with a sound like the gurgling of a waterfall. His belly swelled like a huge pair of bellows, and he had to breathe out very slowly, so as not to blow down all the trees in the forest.

"Please join us," said the Prince.

"Gladly," said the man.

At the edge of the forest they met a third man. At the sound of their feet he tied a bandage over his eyes.

"What are you doing?" asked the Prince. "Are you afraid of us, or do you want to hide your eyes?"

"You have spoken the truth, young man," said the stranger. "If I look at a person or object it shatters into pieces." He unfastened the bandage and looked at a great boulder. It split apart as if struck by lightning.

"You are a wonderful man," cried the Prince. "What is your name?"

"My name is Lagad Spiz (*Clear Sight*)."

"Would you like to come with us on our travels?"

"Gladly, I am looking for adventure." And Lagad Spiz joined them, after first covering his eyes.

Soon they reached the Enchanter's castle. It was dark and gloomy, and the door was bound with iron. They knocked loudly, but no one came to welcome them.

"Lagad Spiz, take off your bandage," said the Prince. Lagad Spiz obeyed and the iron lock fell to the ground.

They entered the castle, and walked through the empty rooms. There was no one to be seen, but a fine dinner was laid out in the dining room.

They ate until they were satisfied then continued their walk about the castle. At last they met the Enchanter. He had three iron belts bound about his chest and he asked them why they had come. The Prince explained that he wished to marry the maiden that he was keeping prisoner.

“I thought as much,” said the Enchanter, “and I guessed that you were a king’s son. Still, all who wish to win the maiden must pass the same tests, and if they fail they must meet with the same fate.”

That night the four friends were led to the maiden’s bedchamber. If they could watch over her all night, they would be able to take her away with them.

They stayed awake for a long time, but they were all tired and at last they fell asleep. In the morning they awoke and found that the maiden was gone. They had to find her before noon.

“Lagad Spiz, we need your help,” said the Prince. Lagad Spiz looked in the darkest corners of the castle, but he could not see the maiden.

“Look outside the castle, in the forests, on the mountains, in the oceans,” said the Prince.

“I can see her,” said Lagad Spiz. “She is hidden in an acorn, a hundred leagues away, in the heart of a forest.”

“Now it is my turn,” said Hir. “Climb onto my back, Lagad Spiz.” He made his legs so long that they covered the distance with ease. Soon they had picked the acorn, freed the maiden, and returned to the castle. When the Enchanter arrived at the first stroke of noon he swelled with anger, and one of the iron belts about his chest burst asunder.

The next night the friends once again watched over the maiden, and once again they fell asleep. In the morning she was gone.

“Lagad Spiz, we need your help,” said the Prince. Lagad Spiz looked and looked and at last he saw the girl five hundred leagues away, hidden in a grain of wheat.



Once again he climbed on Hir's back and directed him over mountains and valleys until they reached the field of corn. They picked the grain and returned with the maiden to the castle. The Enchanter was filled with rage, and his second belt burst asunder.

The third night the test was the same and once again the four friends fell asleep. The next morning the room was empty.

"We cannot fail now," said the Prince. "You must help us again, Lagad Spiz."

Lagad Spiz looked and looked but he could not find the maiden. At last, at eleven o'clock, he cried:

"I can see her. She is a thousand leagues away, hidden in a ring at the bottom of a lake." How could they find her and return in time?

Hir set off with Lagad Spiz and Ledan on his back. Soon he had reached the lake.



“It is up to you now, Ledan,” he said. Ledan sucked up the water in mighty mouthfuls, and in a little while they saw the ring lying at the bottom. Leaving Ledan behind to slowly let out the water they took the ring and hastened back to the castle. Midday was chiming as they entered.

We are lost,” murmured Hir.

“No, not yet,” said Lagad Spiz. “This will get there before the Enchanter.” So saying, he threw the ring in through an open window. When the Enchanter entered, the maiden was standing before him.

“I have been defeated by this little prince,” cried the Enchanter. The third belt fell at his feet and as it touched the ground he was turned to stone. The Prince returned with his bride and his three companions to his father’s court. Before long, there was the most magnificent wedding to which even I was invited.

I was given a piece of white bread and butter and I hurried back to my village to tell this story to my friends.

Told by Louis Le Fur from Séglie