

The Lonely King and the Polisher

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Once upon a time in a far off land, a great and powerful king was lonely. There were certainly plenty of people around. There were his royal advisors, smart men with great wisdom and knowledge. Most of them were very old and only wanted to talk about important matters like how much to tax the people and which country to take over next. The king liked them well enough but even when he spent all day with them he was still lonely.

There were plenty of servants around too. Chefs who cooked his favorite food, tailors who sewed his beautiful clothes. Barbers, maids, wranglers, handymen and gardeners all scurried about doing their duties as servants of the king. They fussed over him and took care of his every want and desire yet, the king remained lonely.

The royal advisors saw that the king was troubled so they advised the king to take long walks in the royal garden to relax but that did not help. They ordered the chef to cook more food and the tailor to sew more clothes which only made him fat and well dressed. The maids scrubbed the floors cleaner than they had ever been; the barber took extra care to make sure that every hair on his head was the perfect length. Everyone worked harder than they had ever worked before but the king was still lonely.

One day when everyone else was busily running around the king took his quiet walk through the garden. Alone in the dark cavernous throne room the royal throne polisher was putting another buff on the gold and purple chair. She took extra care to make sure that every nook of gold and cranny of silver sparkled like stars. When reaching down for the can of polish, a large lock of her hair became entangled in the finely crafted scroll work in the back of the throne. She tugged and pulled hoping to pull free without pulling her hair from the roots but the tangle would not release. She called to the royal barber to come and cut her frazzled tangle but no one heard her.

The sound of foot steps approached from down the long echoy hall. It couldn't be the one of the old royal advisors because this was the time of day they all took a nap.

It couldn't be one of the servants because they only shuffled in their soft shoes so as not to bother the king with clicking taps on tile. The heavy hard healed steps stopped outside the doors. She heard a slow, heavy sigh as the doors swung open. The king had returned from his walk in the royal garden.

"Why do I take those miserable walks?" he said to himself not noticing the polisher crouched behind the throne. "I don't feel any better now than I did when I started." He flung his silky robe in frustration and it spun freely through the air as he sat down.

A gentle breeze fanned from the cape and felt good on the polisher's blushing face. She didn't know whether to make her presence known or to try and remain in silence. To say something might startle the king and make him angry. On the other hand to say nothing and possibly be discovered could have dreadful consequences. She could be mistook for a thief or a spy. She would have been better off pulling out her hair when she had the chance. There was no choice now but to say something and do her best not to startle him. Hopefully, he would take pity on her.

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"Your majesty?" she said only moving her mouth. She was so frightened that no air or sound moved passed her lips. "Your majesty?" she said again managing a pleading whisper.

"Who is there?....Speak!" bellowed the king.

"Your humble servant.... the polisher, your majesty." Her words were quick and timid. Fearful tears filled her eyes as she looked again for a possible escape. There was none. The king sensed no threat from the mysterious voice and relaxed in the straight high backed throne shifting his weight to one side and resting his head on his hand.

"Why are you hiding? Come out where I can see you," he said in more subdued tones squinting to quicken the adjustment of his eyes to the dark shadowy room.

"I can not, for I am entangled," she admitted with growing strength in her voice.

The king found this interesting. He assumed that her entanglement had something to do with a business deal gone bad or a jealous husband or some other typical peasant trouble. "Is there nowhere else you can go, child."

"Oh no, your Majesty, I can go nowhere else but to sit here with you until I become untangled." At this he raised an eye brow and suppressed a grin. He sat forward marveling at this servants tenacity for a solution to her problem.

"I see, then what may I ask should we do until you become... untangled?" He mused at this strange encounter. There was a thoughtful silence as the polisher realized that the king was somehow enjoying her presence. This inquiry was different than the royal decrees that she had often heard from this room. This was not like the questions asked of advisors or other heads of state. This was an invitation to friendship.

"We might just talk, for I know you to be a wise and knowledgeable man. There is much that I would like to learn from you." She even surprised herself with her boldness.

"Certainly, there are many great thinkers and teachers throughout the kingdom who could help you?"

"True, your Majesty, but I will not leave this place until I am untangled."

The king still could not see this persistent servant but found himself enjoying the company. They talked for a long while about life in the palace and life as a servant. There were times where the king even laughed within the joy of conversation. There were moments where the polisher forgot that she was actually talking to the king as she was swept away by his stories and wisdom. After a long while there was a reflective pause. The king stood to his feet and reach out his hands into the empty room.

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"I ask you now, what is it that I can do for you to release you from your... entanglement, as you put it?"

The polisher did not hesitate and explained her predicament. For to ask a king to do the work of a barber would have been unthinkable a few hours before but now she felt at home in his presence. The king was delighted. Not in recent memory had he spent such an enjoyable afternoon. He invited the polisher to come and talk to him everyday. Even if it meant not getting all the polishing chores done around the palace.

Imagine a king enjoying the company of servant. Imagine a servant invited to daily conversation with a king. Imagine.