

The Hag-ridden knight

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On a hot summer day, a knight rose from his slumber after celebrating a successful campaign with his brethren. It had been a jolly celebration of their triumph against the order of the lands up north. They had been mighty foes, and had beaten the knight numerous times, which made this victory all the sweeter, for they had finally settled the score. And obtained an elixir with which they now celebrated.

Nonetheless, the feeling of satisfaction faded when the warrior perceived a queer sensation. It was as though the furniture in his chamber were swaying and moving, the sun peeping through the window was blinding and hurtful, and he felt that a sword was splitting his skull. "I have been poisoned, there is no other explanation. Those wretches, they have put something in the elixir flask". But no toxin could stop a knight of such might and valour, and given that he had no quest for the day, he decided to embark on a journey to the temple of Haleness in order to get a potion that might heal his ailment.

He had not managed to exit the castle when he came across his first obstacle. A being who bore tremendous power over him was standing at the main entrance, it was a witch of immense beauty and even greater malice, who also happened to have betrothed our hero.

"Thou hath been indulging thyself too much,
thou shall cease your senseless campaigns or fall,
or it will bring the end to us all." Cried the witch.
"Cut your nonsense, wench. I shall go in search of the antidote"
"If thou pretend to return to this fort,
must you bring something green and some pork,
and you better be fast or it will be too late,
for the temple will soon close its gates."

The knight could never fully grasp what his maiden said or wanted, not because she was a witch or for speaking in riddles, but because she was a woman and he was a man. What he did understand was that he had no time to waste in his journey, or else he would not have access to the temple, to his fortune his horse was awaiting him outside of the fortress.

Outside the castle was a desolate land, the sun shone bright and not a cloud was in sight, the air was dense and the heat intense. For a second the knight faltered, but his strong will pushed him forward, until he reached his trusty companion. It was a beast so powerful and fast, that it was said to have the strength of many horses. The warrior put on his helm, got on his horse and they crossed the hard and hostile road at a great pace.

Across the kingdom they found ferocious wolves, enormous beasts that engulfed people whole and spit them out in their lairs, and magical light orbs that would freeze everyone in their places, but none of that could stop the knight. Until, at some point, a rusty chariot came out of nowhere, and he barely managed to avoid slamming against it. The hero halted, got off his horse and hurled a curse at the chariot driver, who turned out to be a disgusting ogre. The huge monster stepped out of his chariot, his hairless oily head shone in the cruel sun, his mouth was wide, his teeth yellow and his breath toxic.

"Art thou blind or foolish? Did you not see I was crossing?" cried the creature.
"You filthy thing, you should have waited for me to pass first, you brute."

In retaliation for such an offense, the ogre grabbed him and they started struggling and exchanging blows. The knight was courageous and honorable, but he was no fool. He

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knew his foe to be of stronger build and mightier than him, and in his present condition he would be unable to be victorious. He was also aware that he had no time to waste, so he had to find a way of settling the fight without staining his honour. To his fortune, the other travellers and pilgrims were not fond of battles in the middle of the road and, wishing to resume their journeys, their mouths spit blasphemy and their beasts let out piercing cries.

“O Lord, how wise and great art thou, thou pluckest me out” he reckoned.

In view of the fierceness of the battlefield, both parties settled the conflict, one mounted his steed and the other his chariot. “The next time I lay eyes on you, fiend, I shall not be so merciful” claimed the knight as he made his exit.

Rushing on his horse, he managed to reach the temple on time and inside of it he found all sorts of unguents and containers with mysterious concoctions. A sorcerer in a white robe came to him and gave him the powder he needed in exchange for a few gold coins, he mixed it with water and consumed it. After completing his quest, he returned to his castle.

Once he arrived, his wife asked him: “Did you bring something to eat?”

He had forgotten. And so the knight departed on another journey.