

The Warrior Violinist

by Jay Reise

There was once a young fellow who everyone thought was a dreamer and lazy. He hated to do school work and never helped around the house. The only thing he cared about was playing his homemade violin. He would play it all day.

He hated doing chores - - so he did them as fast as possible and skipped his homework whenever he could. His mother would insist and scold him, and nag him - day and night to no end. But as soon as he could he would start playing again. He kept his violin by his bedside so he could play it first thing in the morning when he woke up. He sometimes skipped lunch so he could continue playing. And he pestered his mother every night asking to play just one more song before he went to bed. So he wasn't really lazy. He just liked to play his violin - which took A LOT of practice.

One day was walking through the town when he found himself standing beside a high wall. He wondered what was on the other side. Slinging his violin over his shoulders he very carefully began to climb the wall, inching his way up as he placed his fingers and toes in the small cracks between the stones. And when he reached the top, a beautiful garden greeted his astonished eyes. There were magnificent palm trees with huge leaves that swayed like sheets in the wind, and enormous flowers that looked like pitchers holding honey. Exotic birds with orange and white feathers drank at fountains of sparkling water. And in the middle of the garden, a lovely young girl was sitting by a pool of water. She was petting a deer and other animals as they came to the pool to drink. From then on he came every day to sit on the wall and play his violin. The girl never once looked at him or acknowledged him, but simply sat there day after day by the pool. After a while, the songs he was playing sounded different from before. They came more from his heart and expressed his inner feelings. The young man had fallen in love. He dreamed of one day walking into the garden and telling the girl of his feelings for her.

It came to pass that one day he heard some villagers talking about the Princess of the kingdom, and they described the garden where she spent her days sitting by the pool. Our hero realized that he had fallen in love with the Princess. He knew a king's daughter would never love a boy who was a dreamer rather than a warrior, and only played the violin. Heartbroken, he went to the garden later that day to play for her one last time. He played more beautifully and sadly than he ever had before. He played and played, pouring his heart out. His music became more and more intense, and after a time he became so excited that he thought he would faint. Finally he could play no longer and he suddenly jumped down the wall - and RAN! But as he jumped, he dropped his violin in the garden.

Desolate, and feeling even more alone without his violin, he wandered around the town all night. At dawn he was exhausted. He sat down against a tree and began to fall asleep when he heard some merchants murmuring. They were talking about a powerful

magician named Habee who could perform ANY MIRACLE - but he lived a three-day walk into the desert. The boy immediately began to walk. And walk. And walk. For three days he kept on without stopping - until he came to a very peculiar house.

There he met Habee, the magician, and told him his story. He asked Habee to change him into someone a princess would love...a strong, mighty warrior. Habee told him he could do this but warned the young lad that once he changed a man's soul, it could not be changed back again. Our hero agreed to make the change ----- and as soon as he did ----- he felt himself getting stronger.

Five long years passed, during which the kingdom was attacked and the King lost most of his land and half of his wealth. He was about to surrender, when a handsome, strong prince dressed in purple came into the King's camp. He told the King that if he would let him lead the army, he would win back the King's lands. In return he asked only to be given his heart's desire. In return he asked only to be given his heart's desire. The King agreed and the Prince went out to do battle.

Within weeks, the young Prince triumphed, completely vanquishing all enemies, and the King was restored to power and wealth. The King was overjoyed and immediately asked the Prince to visit him in his palace. The Prince arrived to the city with much fanfare.

Women scattered flowers at his feet and everyone gathered to catch a glimpse of the powerful warrior. When he arrived at the palace, he saw the Princess seated at her father's side. The King offered the warrior much wealth and power, but the Prince said he wanted only one thing, his heart's desire - to marry the Princess.

The King thought this was a wonderful idea and turned to his daughter for her approval. The Princess stood up.

She said that if the King commanded it, she would obey. But she warned the Prince that she could never love him as he deserved because she had already given her heart to another. She then told of a young fellow who several years before had sat on her garden wall day after day, playing his violin. His music seemed to touch all the emotions of her heart. She dreamed of the day when he would come into the garden and love her as much as she loved him. But one day, after playing more beautifully than ever before, he stopped coming. And on that last day he had dropped his violin. The Princess kept the violin hoping that one day the mysterious violinist would return. She said she would never love as deeply again and she had sworn never to marry. Never, that is, unless a man could be found who could play the violin for her as sweetly as the young man in the garden.

With this, the Prince's heart jumped and a smile crossed his face. He told the Princess that he understood. For he too had once loved that deeply and would therefore never ask her to marry against her will.

“But,” he said to the Princess, “if you will bring me the violin, I would like to play for you.”

With this, a murmur went through the court and the violin was quickly found and brought in.

The Prince picked it up. It looked like a toy in his battle-scarred hands. He turned it over and recognized it as his very own, the one he had made himself and played so lovingly in his youth. His heart beat faster and he thought of when he used to play for the Princess in the garden, and now here was his life's dream. He thought hard of the last song he had played for the Princess as he sat on the top of the wall.

He tucked the violin under his chin and picked up the bow. He took a deep breath and looked at the Princess. She looked back at him and smiled. He closed his eyes and drew the bow across the strings.

[The Prince is able to play only a few random and isolated notes.]

A murmur of surprise went through the court. The Princess turned pale.

"Please try again, young man," asked the King.

Again the Prince drew the bow across the strings.

[The same result.]

The Princess shook her head. A tear began streaming down her cheek.

The Prince was dumbfounded and horrified. What could be wrong?

Then the words of the magician Habee echoed loudly in his head: “Once you change a man's soul, it cannot be changed back again.”

Gently handing the violin back to the Princess, the Prince bowed, quietly turned and left the palace, never to be seen or heard from again.