

The Druid

By John Ricks

The Druid
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The Princess entered the breakfast chamber and to her pleased surprise her father was there eating. She walked up to him and gave him a hug which he returned gladly.

“It is nice to see you daughter. You are very radiant today. Is this a special day? Did I forget a birthday or anniversary?”

The Princess said, “No father. I have been happy a lot lately.”

The King said, “I am not complaining you understand, but what is causing you this great happiness, it is not your norm.”

She said, “Every day, for weeks now, a little song bird has landed on my window seal and watched me getting dressed in the morning. I do not know who lost it, but it allows me to touch it and pet its feathers. When I am ready to leave it flies off and returns at night to watch me prepare for bed. It is the most precious thing I have ever seen.”

When the king heard this he roared with anger. “Guards!” He exclaimed to his daughter. “Daughter, I hate to tell you this, but I am at war with a druid. He came here demanding payment for cutting into his forest. HIS FOREST! I am the King. All forests are mine! The nerve of the man! When I called for his head he turned into a small song bird and flew away. I thought I was rid of him. Now I find that he has been watching my own daughter dress and undress every morning and night. I will have his head and burn down his forest. So what if we inadvertently destroyed his home. He was not given permission to live there.”

The Princess said, “Oh my. How long did he live there before you found out?”

The King said, “I am told thousands of years.”

The Princess looked perplexed, “Then father. He was here before our ancestors. He has a right to his land.”

The King was not interested, "I own that land. I own all land. I am not in a sharing mood! Do you know what he wanted for payment?"

"No."

"You. My own daughter. It seems he has been interested in you for some time and now he has been spying on your bed chamber."

She blushed red, pretended anger and asked, "Why would he be watching me each day? He must have received his eye full by now. What will you do?"

The guards came and the King gave orders. The King said, "Druids cannot change shape if they don't have the room to change into their own form. I will have him captured and placed into a tiny little cage with no door." Then his smile turned deeper and he said, "I will let you keep him forever as a little bird. Think of the joy his songs will give you and the frustration he will go through seeing you every day and never being allowed to touch you. A magical cage that makes him sing happily, but keeps him frustrated at the close proximity of the girl he apparently loves. What a fitting punishment it will be when he sees you wed to a proper husband. Each morning and night he will see and know that he can never have you. Wizard!"

The Wizard came into the room, "Yes Majesty."

"I need a cage for a very small bird. One with no door and impossible to break. I need it magically fixed so that any bird in the cage will be forced to sing happily."

The old Wizard said, "I have a friend that has an artifact cage like that. It is very small. Too small for a normal bird, but a small bird should fit. It would have no place to spread its wings. It would be cramped and uncomfortable. It was used for a pixy that got too full of itself. The happy singing spell is easy. I assure you the cage cannot open unless the bird dies of natural causes. It cannot kill itself, and there is an anchor in the cage preventing dimensional movement."

The King smiled, "Perfect!"

The Wizard said, "I shall make it happen."

The King turned to his daughter. "Keep the bird happy until the cage is ready."

The Daughter said with an evil grin, "I will father."

That night when the bird showed up in the Princess's window she gave it extra attention. Ensuring it saw her change into her night clothes and slide into bed across silk sheets. The bird flew around the bed several times before leaving.

Two days later the cage was ready. The Wizard handed it to the Princess with verbal instructions. "Just touch this cage to the bird and it will instantly be inside. Are you sure you want to do this? The bird will never get out and the spells are very powerful. It will always act happy. The cage is made of an unbreakable material. It will never escape."

The Princess took the cage and kissed the cheek of the Wizard and left. That night the Princess held the cage behind her back as the little bird flew in and started singing. She walked up to it and touched the cage to the bird and it vanished only to reappear inside the cage. At first it was in panic and then the spell took effect and it started to happily sing. She put the cage down and prepared for bed. The bird tried to fly, tried to get out, but the cage held. It was still singing, but you could see it was panicked. The bird was breathing hard from its escape efforts and acting like it wanted out more than anything.

The Princess bent down and said to the little bird, "Well Princess, thanks to the King I have you caged, and when I kill your father I will become him and I will be in charge of my lands again."