

A FABLE SHORT STORY

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The Setup:

An adventurer, a bard, and a fairy-tale creature walk into a tavern. Write a short scene that demonstrates dramatic conflict, strong characterisation, witty dialogue and a light-hearted tone. Resolve the scene with the adventurer embarking on a quest to solve a mystery. Five pages max.

INT. JEERS TAVERN - NIGHT

The tavern door opens and the ADVENTURER enters, their features shrouded in a cloak. Their head down, the Adventurer discretely moves to a darkened corner, away from the bulk of the bar's rabble rousing patrons. The minute they have settled in, they are accosted by a overly enthusiastic BARD.

BARD

It is YOU! The Hero Who Walked
Away! In our fabled Jeers Tavern no
less, the place where nobody knows
your name! I beseech you, enthrall
me with news your latest quest!

ADVENTURER

Ugh. So much for truth in tavern
creeds. Leave me be, I don't do
that anymore.

BARD

A bit moodier than the legends let
on aren't ya? No matter! A good old
fashioned tavern sing along will
lift your spirits!

As the Bard gets ready to pluck her mandolin, the Adventure's hand reaches out and grips it firmly.

ADVENTURER

Stop. It won't work. I don't... I
CAN'T do that anymore.

BARD

Can't? Why not?

The Adventurer sighs.

ADVENTURER

I have some... performance...
issues.

BARD

Pffft! That's not a problem silly!

ADVENTURER

It's not?

BARD

Good heavens, no! Millions of
villagers all over the kingdom
suffer from such a malady and have
perfectly healthy relationships.

(MORE)

BARD (CONT'D)

Geoffrey in Old Town can sell you
this little blue potion that...

ADVENTURER

No, no, no! Not that kind of
problem! I mean the hero stuff! The
swordplay, the magic, the
sharpshooting! I physically cannot!

The Bard gawks, trying to process this information.

BARD

You mean your legendary strength is
gone?

ADVENTURER

Can barely swing a cutlass.

BARD

Surely you retained your mastery of
will?

ADVENTURER

Can't even ignite a candle.

BARD

And your world-renowned skill?

ADVENTURER

I'd miss a Brute Hobbe at three
paces.

The Bard is flabbergasted.

BARD

But... but... how? Your the Hero
Who Walked Away? You slew the evil
witch Baba Yaga and survived her
deadly Kill Spell!

ADVENTURER

Ah yes, about that. I didn't
exactly survive.

BARD

But of course you did! How else do
you sit here before me? Wait! Are
you a ghost??? A ghoul???

The Bard tests the Adventurer's corporeal status, pulling and
poking him. The Adventurer, annoyed, swats away her hands.

ADVENTURER

No damnit! Stop that!

The Bard stops.

ADVENTURER (CONT'D)

Yes, the legend is true. I did kill Baba Yaga and walk away from the blast of her dying Kill Spell. But alas, her Kill Spell was really more of a Curse Spell. I soon discovered I had lost my heroic abilities. For the past year I have scoured the land looking for a way to regain my them, but found nothing.

Across the room, a loud commotion erupts. The Adventurer and Bard look over to see a group of thugs have picked up a FROG and are dangling him from his hind legs.

ALPHA THUG

Hey lads! Who here hungry for some toad legs?

The thugs erupt with drunken laughter and the Alpha Thug draws a dagger.

FROG

I'm not a toad you hooligan! I'm a frog! Leave me to my quest or I'll have you drawn and quartered!

The thugs guffaw at the frog's threats. The Bard turns back to the Adventurer, panicked.

BARD

Do something! They are going to kill him!

ADVENTURER

Has that mandolin made you deaf woman? I just told you I can't!

BARD

But you can! Your will, your skill, your strength... none of those things made you a hero! This did!

The Bard jabs the head of her mandolin against the Adventurer's chest, directly on top of their heart.

BARD (CONT'D)

As long as that's in the right place, the people of Albion will believe in you.

Across the bar, the Alpha Thug is holding the frog to the tavern table. Right as he is about to bring his dagger down, he is startled by a voice behind him.

ADVENTURER (O.S.)
I would not do that if I were you.

The Alpha Thug turns around to face the voice.

ALPHA THUG
Yeah? And who's gonna stop me?

ADVENTURER
Me.

The Adventurer takes down his hood and parts his cloak allowing everyone to see his face and the guild seal. An audible gasp escapes from the thugs and tavern patrons.

THUG HENCHMAN
Boss! That's the hero of Albion!

ADVENTURER
If any harm comes to that toad...

FROG
I'm a frog!

ADVENTURER
...frog, you will leave this tavern
in pieces.

The Adventurer puts his hand on the hilt of his sword, tilting the blade so it glints in the torchlight.

ADVENTURER (CONT'D)
Or perhaps I'll incinerate you and
your lot with flames from the
depths of hell itself. Or maybe a
bolt of steel square between the
eyes. I'm feeling generous, might
even let you choose.

The Adventurer stares down the Alpha Thug, unwavering. The tension in the room is unbearable. A bead of sweat rolls down the Alpha Thug's head.

ALPHA THUG
Fine. Take the blasted toad. Too
scrawny ta eat anyway.

FROG

A toad? Really? Look at my legs! My smooth skin! I'm clearly a frog you fool!

The Alpha Thug chucks the frog at the Adventurer and they catch him gently. The Adventurer returns to their table, the frog in hand. The Bard is still there, clapping with delight. She starts writing an impromptu song.

BARD

Oh hooray! Hooray! The hero returned to save the day! They were cunning and...

ADVENTURER

Shut up.

The bard stops, and clears her throat awkwardly.

BARD

Sorry.

ADVENTURER

Now frog, tell me of your troubles.

FROG

My name is Prince Magnus. I was changed into a frog by a powerful, evil witch. But I know of an ancient scroll that tells how to reverse even her most powerful, dark, cursed magics. It's location, however, is a mystery.

ADVENTURER

This witch have a name?

PRINCE MAGNUS

Had a name. One you know well. The late Baba Yaga.

The Adventurer's eyes grow wider. The Bard can barely suppress her joy, clenching her Mandolin tightly.

BARD

WE ARE GOING ON A QUEST!!!

The Adventurer starts to protest the use of the word "We", but stops. A faint smile appears on their face.

ADVENTURER

It would seem we are.