

King Arthur, Galahad and the Witch

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Translation: [Ingeniería Filosófica](#)

This story takes us to the times of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, times of Sorcery and castles with drawbridges, times of intrigue and heroic battles, times of magical dragons who throw fire from their mouths and Paladins of honour and unlimited value.

King Arthur had fallen ill. In just two weeks his weakness had bedridden him and he almost did not eat. All the courts physicians were called upon to heal the monarch, but no one could diagnose his illness. Despite all the proper care, the good King got worse.

One morning, as the servants aired the room where the King lay asleep, one of them told to the other sadly:

- *He will die...*

In the room was Sir Galahad, the most heroic and handsome Knight of the Round Table and companion of Kings Arthurs greatest battles.

Galahad heard the servant's words and stood like a thunderbolt, he grabbed the servant by his clothes and shouted:

- *Don't you ever repeat that word again. You understand? The King will live; the King will recover... We just need to find a physician who knows his illness, you hear?*

The servant, trembling, dared to answer:

- *The matter is, Sir, is that Arthur is not ill, he is under a spell.*

These were times where magic was so logical and natural as the law of gravity.

- *Why do you say that, damn it! – Galahad asked.*
- *I have many years, my Sir, and I have seen dozens of men and women in this situation, only one has survived.*
- *That means there is a possibility... Tell me how they did it, the one who escaped death.*
- *One must try to get a sorcerer of greater power than the one who performed the spell; if that is not done, the bewitched dies.*
- *There must be in the kingdom a sorcerer of such power – Galahad said –, but if he is not in this kingdom I will search the other side of the sea and bring him.*
- *That I know of, there are only two people powerful enough to heal Arthur, Sir Galahad; one is Merlin, but even if he finds out it will take him two weeks to arrive and I do not think that the King can withstand any longer.*
- *¿And the other?*

The old servant bowed his head nodding from side to side negatively.

- *The other is the Witch of the mountain... But even if someone were brave enough to search for her, which I doubt, she would never come and heal the king who banished her from the palace many years ago.*

The Witch's reputation was really sinister. It was known that she was able transform the bravest warrior into her slave just by staring at his eyes; it was said that only by touching her one's blood would freeze in one's veins; they say that she boils people in oil to eat their hearts.

But Arthur was the best friend Galahad had in his life, he had fought by his side hundreds of times, he had heard his most banal and deeper sorrows. There was no risk that he would not take to save his sovereign, his friend and even the best person he had met.

Galahad donned his armour and rode his horse directly to the Black mountain where the cave of the Witch was.

He barely crossed the river, and he noticed that the sky was beginning to darken. Opaque and dense clouds perishing anchored at the foot of the mountain. Upon reaching the cave, the night seemed to have fallen in broad day light.

Galahad dismounted and walked toward the hole in the stone. Indeed, the supernatural cold coming out of the cave and the foul odour emanating from inside forced him to rethink his quest, but the Knight resisted and continued down the waterlogged floor and the gloomy tunnel. Occasionally, the fluttering of a bat instinctively led him to cover his face.

Fifteen minutes of walking, the tunnel opened into a huge cavern, impregnated with an acrid smell and a yellowish light generated by hundreds of candles. In the centre, stirring a steamy pot, was the Witch.

She was a typical Witch of a story, as his grandmother described to him in those horror stories she used to tell him in his childhood before bedtime and that kept him awake fantasizing about fighting evil undertaking such tasks when he was old enough to be a Knight of the court.

There she was, hunched over, dressed in black, elongated bony hands and long nails that finished like claws, small eyes, hooked nose, prominent chin and an attitude that embodied the horror.

Galahad had barely entered, without even looking the Witch shouted:

- *Go away before I turn you into a toad or something worse!*
- *I have come searching for you –Galahad said–, I need help for my friend who is very ill.*
- *Heh...heh...heh... –laughed the Witch –. The King is under a spell and although I did not conjure it myself, there is nothing you can do to prevent his death.*
- *But you... you are more powerful than the one who conjured the spell. You could save him – argued Galahad.*
- *Why would I do that? –asked the Witch remembering with resentment her despise for the King.*
- *For whatever you ask –said Galahad–, I will personally make sure you get paid the price you demand.*

The Witch stared at the Knight. It was certainly strange to have such a character in her cave for help. Even in the light of the candles Galahad was incredibly handsome, which added to his demeanour made him an image of panache and beauty.

The Witch glanced at him and said:

- *The price is this: If I heal the King but only if I heal him...*
- *Whatever you ask... –said Galahad.*
- *I want you to marry me!*

Galahad trembled. He could not conceive spending the rest of his days living with the Witch, and yet, it was Arthur's life. How many times his friend had saved him during battle. He owed him not one, but a hundred lives... Besides, the kingdom needed Arthur.

- *So be it –said the Knight–, if you heal Arthur I will espouse you, I give you my word. But please, let's make haste, I'm afraid of reaching the castle for it to be too late to save him.*

Silently, the Witch took her suitcase, put a few powders and potions inside, picked up a leather bag full of strange ingredients and headed outside, followed by Galahad.

Once outside, Sir Galahad brought his horse and with the most proper care worthy of a Queen, he helped the Witch get on the saddle. He rode the horse by her side and began to gallop to the royal castle.

Once at the castle, he shouted the guard to lower the bridge, and he reluctantly did.

Flanked by the people of that fortress who muttered not believing what they saw or stepped aside to not cross their eyes with the horrible woman, Galahad arrived at the gateway of the royal quarters.

With his hand he prevented the Witch of getting down by her own means and rushed to give her his arm to help her. She was surprised and looked at him almost sarcastically.

- *If you are going to be my wife –he said– you must be treated as such.*

Leaning on his arm, the Witch entered the royal chamber. The King had worsened since the departure of Galahad; he no longer woke up and ate.

Galahad ordered everyone to leave the room. The King's personal physician asked to remain and Galahad gave his consent.

The Witch approached Arthur's body, sniffed, said some strange words and then prepared a concoction of a nasty green colour mixed with reed. When she tried to give the patient a drink of the liquid, the physician grabbed her hand tightly.

- *No –he said–. I am the physician and I do not trust in witchcraft. Get out of...*

And surely he had continued saying "this castle", but he was not able to do so; Galahad was next to him with a sword near the physician's throat and with an angry look.

- *Do not touch this woman –said Galahad–; you are the one who is leaving... Now! – he shouted.*

The physician ran frightened. The Witch brought the bottle to the King's lips and dropped the contents into his mouth.

- *And now? –asked Galahad.*
- *We must wait –said the Witch.*

That night, Galahad took off his cloak and he made a small bed at the foot of the King's bed. He would stay in the door looking after both of them.

Next morning, for the first time in many days, the King woke up.

- *Food! –he shouted– I want to eat... I am very hungry.*

- *Good morning, your majesty –said Galahad with a smile, while he rang the bell calling the servants.*
- *My dear friend –said the King–, I feel so hungry like if have not eaten for weeks.*
- *You did not eat for weeks –affirmed Galahad.*

All of a sudden, at the foot of his bed appeared the image of the Witch looking at him with a grin that probably replaced a smile in her face. Arthur thought it was a hallucination. He closed and rubbed his eyes until in fact, indeed, the Witch was there, in his own room.

- *I have said to you a hundred times; I do not want to see you near the palace. Out of here! – ordered the King.*
- *Pardon me, Your Majesty –said Galahad–, you should know that if you dismiss her you are also throwing me out. It is your privilege to drive us both out, but if she leaves I am leaving.*
- *Have you gone mad? –asked Arthur– Where would you go with that infamous monster?*
- *Careful, highness, you are talking about my future wife –replied Galahad.*
- *What? Your future wife? –asked Arthur. I wanted to introduce you to marriageable girls of the best families of the kingdom, the most coveted princesses of the region, the most beautiful women in the world, and you have rejected them all. How are you going to marry her?*

The Witch arranged her hair mockingly and said:

- *It is the price he paid for me to heal you.*
- *No! –said the King–. I oppose. I will not allow such madness. I would rather die.*
- *It is done, your majesty –said Galahad.*
- *I forbid you to marry her –said Arthur.*
- *Majesty –replied Galahad–, there is only one thing in this world more important to me than your command, and that is my word. I made an oath and I intend to fulfil it. If you were to die tomorrow, there would be two events in one day.*

The King understood he could not do anything to protect his friend from his oath.

- *Never can I repay your sacrifice for me, Galahad, you are nobler even more than I always knew. –The King approached Galahad and hugged him–. Tell me, at least what I can do for you.*

The next morning, at request of the Knight, in the palace chapel the priest married the couple with the unique presence of His Majesty the King. At the end of the ceremony, Arthur gave Sir Galahad his blessing and a scroll ceding land to the couple across the river and the cabin at the top of the mountain.

When they left the chapel, the central square was unusually deserted; nobody wanted to celebrate or attend the wedding; the corridors of people spoke of witchcraft, transferred spells, madness and possession...

Galahad drove the carriage by the now deserted roads towards the river and thence by the high road into the mountain.

Upon arrival, he hurried down and took his wife lovingly from her waist helping her down from the carriage. He told her he would put the horses away and invited her to their new home. Galahad took a little longer because he preferred to watch the sunset until the red line ended disappearing into the horizon. Only then Sir Galahad took a deep breath and entered.

The home fire was lighted, before him, an unknown figure stood, at the back of the door. It was the silhouette of a woman dressed in semi-transparent white gauze that left guessing curves of a cared and attractive body.

Galahad looked around for the woman who had entered a few minutes before, but he did not see her.

- *Where is my wife? –he asked.*

The woman turned and Galahad felt his heart almost pop out of his chest. It was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Tall, white skin, blue eyes, long blond hair and a both sensual and tender face. The Knight thought he would have had fallen in love with the woman in other circumstances.

- *Where is my wife? – he repeated, but a little more energetic. The woman moved a little closer and she whispered to him:*
- *Your wife, Galahad dear, it is me.*
- *Do not fool me, I know who I married –said Galahad– and she is not like you at all.*
- *You have been so kind with me, Galahad dear, you have been very careful and gentle with me even though you felt you hated my looks, you have defended and respected me so much as no one ever did, that I think you are worthy of this surprise... Half of the time we are together I will have this appearance you see, and the other half of the time, the appearance you met me with... –the woman paused and crossed her eyes with Sir Galahad–. And since you are my husband, my beloved and wonderful husband, it is your privilege to make this decision: What do you prefer, my husband? Would you want me to be this on the daylight and the other at night or the other at daylight and this at night?*

Within the Knight time stopped. This godsend gift was more than he had ever dreamed off. He had resigned his fate for the sake of his friend Arthur and now he was able to choose the future of his life. Should he ask his wife to be the beautiful at broad daylight to walk smugly by the people being the envy of all and suffer in silence and solitude the anguish of his night with the witch? Or would he rather tolerate the mockery and contempt of all who saw his arm with the witch and comfort himself knowing that when nightfall arrived he would have to himself the heavenly pleasure of the company of this beautiful woman he had fallen in love with?

Sir Galahad, the noble Sir Galahad, thought and thought and thought, until he rose his head and spoke:

- *Since you are my wife, my beloved and chosen wife, I ask you to be... whoever you want to be in every moment of every day of our life together...*

The legends has it that when she heard this and realised she could choose by herself who she wanted to be, she decided to be all the time the most beautiful among all the women.

They say that, since that day, every time we find someone, with our heart at his or her hands, and he or she authorizes us to be who we are, invariably we transform ourselves.

We abandon forever the horrible witches and cursed ogres nesting in our shadows so that, when they disappear, it leaves room for the most beautiful, loving and fascinating Knights and Princesses lying, sometimes asleep, within us. Beautiful beings that at first appear to offer the loved one, but they end up taking over our lives unflinching and permanently inhabiting us.

This lesson is harvested along the path of encounter.

True love is nothing more than the inevitable desire to help another to be who he is.

Far beyond that authenticity whether or not in my convenience.

Far beyond that, being who you are.

choosing or not choosing me, to continue our way together.