



The Prophecy

A story written by Mark Worth, for *All the Street's a Stage*, 2019

Our story starts deep in the darkest wood, in a far off land.

Greta, a young girl, found herself walking through the brambles as she searched for the path she had lost hours beforehand. Just as she was about to give up hope, she discovered a cave, with an entrance covered in vines and leaves. Brushing them aside, Greta entered, finding three elderly women sat around a small fire.

"Hello, sorry to disturb you, I'm trying to find my way to the nearest city but somehow I've lost the path." Greta's voice echoed around the chamber.

The three old women looked at each other, almost ignoring Greta completely. When they eventually spoke, their voices were crisp and chilled Greta to the bone.

"She is lost."

"Unaware of where she is."

"Unable to get to the city."

"We could help."

"We could help."

"We. Could. Help"

Uneasy in the way the women made her feel Greta tried to bribe the women. "I have food. You can have it if you wish?"

"She has food."

"She is kind"

"She will be helped."

The three small women stood and approached Greta, stroking her clothes and thanking her for her generosity. In doing so, the strange women revealed themselves to be witches.

"Do not be alarmed child. We wish to help you," the lead witch clipped. "As a reward for your kindness we give you three instructions to find your way through life."

Greta didn't think it possible but the witches held her tighter, and pulled her closer to their toothless grins.

"When lost, always follow your left hand."

"If you find a crown and cloak take them and wear them, always...and Never Ever dance with a bear."

The intensity of the witches words scared Greta so much that she pulled herself free of the women's grip and ran out of the cave as fast as she could. She ran until she could no longer hear the cackles echoing from the cave. Breathless, hands on her knees, Greta realised that she was back in the same predicament as before: lost in the woods with no way of finding the city.

As Greta pushed away the undergrowth she remembered what the witches had said to her: "When lost, always follow your left hand."

Cynically, she pulled the branches aside with her left hand and to her surprise she found a path covered in leaves. Following the path, Greta soon made her way out of the woods and to a clearing where a large lake sat. Kneeling down at the water's edge Greta scooped the water up with her hands and let it wash over her face and hair. She was safe.

As she sat back to lean against a tree Greta sat on something sharp. "Owww." It was a crown covered in a blood soaked cloak.

"If you find a crown and cloak, take them, and wear them, always."

Remembering what the witches had said and knowing how they had been right about following her left hand, Greta picked up the crown, placed it upon her head and wrapped the cloak around her shoulders. She thought nothing more of it, for if the witches had told her to do it, it must be right.

A few hours passed and Greta, with her newly found crown upon her head, soon arrived in the city. Not long after she had arrived, strangers began to bow down before her.

"We wish you well Princess Grace."

"Congratulations Princess Grace," they called out.

With each well wish Greta nodded her head and thanked the kind people.

"Where on earth have you been young lady! No time to tell me now, follow me immediately." A rather round nursemaid appeared from behind Greta, pulling her by the elbow and dragging her towards the tall tower attached to the city's castle.

As Greta entered the castle a herd of women surrounded her, dressing her and powdering her nose. As they separated and stepped back from her, Greta realised she was wearing a wedding dress.

"You've never looked better your highness" the little round nursemaid said. Before she could reply, Greta was whisked down a corridor and towards the castle chapel; it was her wedding day, yet she had never met her future husband and everyone thought she was somebody else, purely because she was wearing a crown?!

Too afraid to reveal the truth, Greta allowed the wedding to go ahead. She nodded and said "I Do" and "I Will" in all the right places but, just before the bridegroom was about to lift her veil and kiss her, Greta stopped the wedding.

"Please stop. This isn't right," Greta pleaded as she spoke over the gasps of the congregation. "I am not who you think I am. I am not Princess Grace. My name is Greta and I come from the woods."

Gasps filled the chapel with many fainting with shock and amazement.

"But you are wearing Princess Grace's crown!" the handsome prince declared.

"I found this Crown and cloak by the lake. They were covered in blood, but the witches in the woods told me that if I should find a crown and cloak I should wear them and never take them off."

At this point the elderly king stood up and cleared his throat.

"I thought this day would never come. I have a terrible confession."

The crowd fell silent.

"Princess Grace is not my only child."

The congregation gasped even more and many more began to faint.

"Princess Grace was, in fact, a twin."

More gasps and more fainting.

"When my two daughters were babies I took them to the witches in the wood to discover their futures. I remember what they said to me to this very day; 'One of your babes will become the world's greatest queen, but her success will be blighted by her sisters death, for she will be killed by a bear. Ashamedly I must admit that not wanting to put ourselves through the ordeal of raising two children only for one to die, we left the youngest of the twins in the woods to be killed by a bear, and raised the other as a lonely child.'"

Upon hearing this, those initial guests who had fainted the first time had come round - only to gasp and faint again!

“So if this crown and cloak were covered in blood,” Greta said “Surely that means that Princess Grace was the twin who was destined to be killed by a bear and I am the one who should be queen?”

The King, arms wide approached Greta “Yes my dear. Welcome home!”

Those of the congregation who were still standing (and hadn't fainted) erupted in cheers and celebrations as their new princess continued with the marriage, delighted in the knowledge that she was going to become the world's greatest queen.

Celebrations for the wedding continued through the night, with dancing fairies blessing the marriage and feuding families coming together with peaceful promises for the future. As the clock struck 10, a dancing bear was brought to into the castle hall and its keeper beckoned his new princess to come and dance with the huge beast.

Forgetting what the witches of the woods had told her, the newly crowned princess Greta stood up and began dancing with the bear. As she did so, a huge firework was set off which shocked the bear and sent him into a rage. The bear's huge giant paws swung and collided with poor Greta, leaving her lifeless at the feet of the King.

“But this cannot be” the king declared. “The witches told me so. Greta was to be the world's greatest Queen!”

The room fell silent. Everyone was confused at the days events...

It was at this moment that the castle hall doors crashed open and in walked Princess Grace, covered in blood. Unable to cope with the sight of blood and the resurrection of the formally dead princess, members of the congregation fainted once more.

“Sorry I am late.” She panted “I was out for my morning walk when I was attacked by a bear. Luckily I was quick enough to outrun it but in doing so I lost both my crown and cloak before getting lost in the woods....What? Why is everyone looking at me like that? Are you ok?”

The King, arms wide approached Princess Grace “Yes my dear. Welcome home!”