

The Wise Man and the Fool

A Troubadour's Story

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IN the court of Germaine there was a wise man and a fool. And the wise man was held in great repute as an astrologer and a sage, insomuch that he sat at the councils of King Germaine and his vassals, and advised both in war and peace. But the fool was a clownish fellow who entertained the king and his court at their revels with buffoonery and sang the old bards' songs to the music of a guitar.

It so happened that, one day in the latter part of the winter, the king decided to go hunting in the Black Forest. And, to this purpose, he set out with a great concourse of dukes and men-at-arms clad in their woolen hunting cloaks and armed with spears and bows and arrows. Near the king rode the wise man and the fool.

"Thou, Rudolph, shall ride by my side," said the king to the wise man, "but thou, knave Taric, shall ride behind," he said to the fool.

And Taric with his bauble and bells bowed his head submissively as was his habit and rode quietly a few paces behind the king. When the party came to the edge of the forest, they tethered their horses to the trees and went down into the ravine. On through the narrow defiles and snow-choked glens they tramped all day, but no sign of game rewarded their search. At length toward evening, the king with the wise man and the fool became separated from the party and wandered about in the deepest part of the forest where the trees were thick and tall and the crevices deep and yawning. Suddenly, out of a jungle dark and tangled, rushed a wild boar and struck the king to the ground where he lay stunned. Above him, the ferocious beast arched his grizzly neck, preparing to gore the prostrate