

Knight Light

A short story by Gale Palmer

Night lay darkly on the land. Its tentacles slithered away from the edges of the light cast by the lamp the knight carried. He was bone weary from peering ahead and felt he had been riding forever. His horse, Courage, picked his way steadily upward along the narrow rocky road. Loose stones occasionally rolled away from under his hooves over the edge to plummet down silently into the darkness below. The lamplight illumined the next few yards clearly, but there was still the need to proceed cautiously. Courage faithfully carried him steadily onward.

Evil fiendishly clawed into his thoughts ever since he had received the King's Invitation. Doubt and fear tormented him incessantly! He turned his thoughts back to how he had lain mortally wounded on the dark battlefield of Cein. With Courage standing by him, whinnying, and softly nudging him, he had finally succumbed to his wounds in hopeless despair! Death's darkness engulfed him! But as he was sinking, light had suddenly pierced the darkness and his despair had melted away as a gentle voice softly spoke; "My friend, it's time to awake and live!" He returned to life as skillful hands had gently bound his wounds. The next morning he had arisen fully healed. Christian asked his companion marveling, "Am I alive?" His companion quickly replied; "The King of Light sent me to find you and restore your life with his healing balm." Christian paused then asked, "How can I ever repay you?" The man had replied, "Ah! You do not owe me! It is the King you owe! He has extended an Invitation to all, including his enemies, who will come; to go to his Castle and stand with his warriors, guarding it until he returns. They keep the Castle's Light burning brightly for all seeking refuge from the evil darkness threatening to engulf the Kingdom. Many, like myself, go out in the night in search of the dying to minister the King's healing balm. Go to the Castle, stay a time, and help keep the light as you learn the King's Healing Way. Then you may also wish to go forth into the darkness to give the King's balm of life to the dying.

If you are asked, you now, serve the King of Light." Startled suddenly by a crashing rock, Christian broke from his thoughts, shuddered, lifted the lamp, and returned to cautiously surveying the illumined stretch of road ahead.

Many dangers threatened his journey. Pitfalls suddenly threatening his way; rocks narrowly missing him as they fled down the mountain; predators stalking from the night, growling ferociously as they crept nearby; vipers slithering on to the road, startling Courage who would suddenly rear up nearly unseating him; but he soon discovered that the lamp he had been given, if lifted high, would send light further into the darkness, revealing a way around the pits and keeping the threats at bay. He marvelled at its power over the dangers of darkness! He also had been given some of the King's healing balm should he need it for himself or another. Along with the lamp, their possession gave him great peace of mind! He paused at a clear stream crossing the road, so Courage could drink. He drank from his goatskin flask and refilled it from the stream. He reached into his waist pouch and retrieved some of the special provision also given him. He retrieved and ate some of the honeyed provender, then reached some to Courage, remounted, and they continued; both refreshed and alert again!

Days later he was still steadily ascending when suddenly he was aware of light penetrating the darkness ahead. It grew brighter and brighter as he approached and miles before he arrived, he knew it was the Castle! The night turned to day! It came into view in the distance and as he approached, he was astounded by its size! It seemed to touch the clouds and extended miles either direction! He heard bugles, shouts, and horses' hoofs clattering. Some warriors in gleaming armour rode out to meet him challenging his approach, "Whose army do you serve, stranger?" Christian boldly replied, "The King of Light! I am here to learn and help keep the Castle Light!" The reply quickly came; "Hurry! The enemy lurks in the darkness to fire flaming arrows at any outside the Castle!" They rode forward and a narrow drawbridge lowered. A warrior rode up beside him; "Inside you will find rest, food, and companionship. We are all here to help keep the beacon, rescue escaping pilgrims, and prepare for the King's return." Christian wondered at the noonday brilliance of the Castle! They crossed the drawbridge and the narrow

gate opened to receive them. As they entered the gate Christian noticed even the cobblestones beamed with brightness! His heart was suddenly filled with thankfulness and peace! He dismounted and knelt to touch the glistening stones of the courtyard. A smiling groom walked up and took Courage by the reins. As they walked away, the groom turned and said "You may come and get him anytime you need."

The others had also dismounted and were heading up the steps to the doors of the Great Hall. Several beckoned him to follow. Christian followed and as he entered the doors a bugle sounded. He looked around in wonder! The very walls gleamed with light! Below him down the steps was a great room filled with long tables brimming with robust platters of bread, meats, delicacies, and fruits. Thousands filled the hall, but there was a seat for every person including himself and the servants. He sat down marveling at the variety prepared before him! Suddenly he was famished! His cup brimmed with crystal clear water, which tasted so sweet it at once satisfied, but left him thirsting for more! Drink as he would, the cup never emptied! The food was just as amazing! It was delicious and satisfying, but still he hungered for more and the platters instantly replenished! As he ate he started looking around at others; there was not a frown among them. The man next to him nudged him smiling, "It seems impossible, but this will be even better tomorrow. You'll see!"

As he finished eating a servant touched him and leaned over his shoulder saying, "If you're ready, follow me and I will show you to your room." Christian nodded, stood, and followed him. They started up one of the many staircases surrounding the edges of the room. As the climbed he saw inscriptions carved into the wall with great story tapestries hanging above each of them. "What are these writings and weavings?" he asked. "These are the lessons, stories, and truths the King wants each in his kingdom to learn and follow." At the top they reached a long hallway with many doors. They walked on for bit and there were more inscriptions and tapestries. The servant stopped, "And here we are!" He gestured towards an open door. "Your lamp will light your room and you may come and go as you please to study the great tapestries and inscriptions. The banquet hall is

always open. There are also messages to you from the King inside the table drawer." Christian suddenly realized he was still carrying his lamp. It had never dimmed nor run out of oil the entire journey! Now, it seemed somehow even brighter. He thanked the servant, entered the room, and closed the door.

The lamplight filled the room; with almost no shadows. He put the lamp on the little table, sat down, and bowed his head giving thanks from a grateful heart! He slowly opened the drawer and took out one of the many neatly folded pages. He opened it and read...

"Dear Christian, I have known you from forever and have so desired your friendship. I rejoice at your arrival! The life I have given you is eternal and was purchased at the cost of my own. With my death I destroyed death for all my Kingdom, rose from the grave immortal, and you are now, immortal with me. Please, abide and learn in my Castle or go forth to the dying until I return. I am away in the Land of Light building a golden City for you and my entire Kingdom! I am coming back, soon, to take you there to be with me, forever! Please, wait for me, Christian; I promise to return!"

Your Friend,

The King of Light And Life

Suddenly, Christian's heart melted with joy! He so yearned to meet his King! Would he return tomorrow? The next day? He got up, took his armour off, put it on the stand provided, and slipped into the clean white linen robe laying across the bed. He moved to the bed, sat down, and stretched out to rest. The word, "Hope," was embroidered into the pillow. The bed softly embraced him and every weariness vanished! As he lay pondering it all in the lamplight, he fell fast asleep, and the dreams which followed danced with visions of anticipation and wonder!