

Jewish Fairy Tales and Legends  
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## The Fairy Princess of Ergetz

### I

In a great and beautiful city that stood by the sea, an old man lay dying. Mar Shalmon was his name, and he was the richest man in the land. Propped up with pillows on a richly decorated bed in a luxurious chamber, he gazed, with tears in his eyes, through the open window at the setting sun. Like a ball of fire it sank lower and lower until it almost seemed to rest on the tranquil waters beyond the harbor. Suddenly, Mar Shalmon roused himself.

"Where is my son, Bar Shalmon?" he asked in a feeble voice, and his hand crept tremblingly along the silken coverlet of the bed as if in search of something.

"I am here, my father," replied his son who was standing by the side of his bed. His eyes were moist with tears, but his voice was steady.

"My son," said the old man, slowly, and with some difficulty, "I am about to leave this world.

My soul will take flight from this frail body when the sun has sunk behind the horizon. I have lived long and have amassed great wealth which will soon be thine. Use it well, as I have taught thee, for thou, my son, art a man of learning, as befits our noble Jewish faith. One thing I must ask thee to promise me."

"I will, my father," returned Bar Shalmon, sobbing.

"Nay, weep not, my son," said the old man. "My day is ended; my life has not been ill-spent. I would spare thee the pain that was mine in my early days, when, as a merchant, I garnered my fortune. The sea out there that will soon swallow up the sun is calm now. But beware of it, my son, for it is treacherous. Promise me--nay, swear unto me--that never wilt thou cross it to foreign lands."

Bar Shalmon placed his hands on those of his father.

"Solemnly I swear," he said, in a broken voice, "to do thy wish--never to journey on the sea, but to remain here in this, my native land. 'Tis a vow before thee, my father."

"'Tis an oath before heaven," said the old man. "Guard it, keep it, and heaven will bless thee. Remember! See, the sun is sinking."

Mar Shalmon fell back upon his pillows and spoke no more. Bar Shalmon stood gazing out of the window until the sun had disappeared, and then, silently sobbing, he left the chamber of death.

The whole city wept when the sad news was made known, for Mar Shalmon was a man of great charity, and almost all the inhabitants followed the remains to the grave. Then Bar Shalmon, his son, took his father's place of honor in the city, and in him, too, the poor and needy found a friend whose purse was ever open and whose counsel was ever wisdom.

Thus years passed away.

One day there arrived in the harbor of the city a strange ship from a distant land. Its captain spoke a tongue unknown, and Bar Shalmon, being a man of profound knowledge, was sent for. He alone in the city could understand the language of the captain. To his astonishment, he learned that the cargo of the vessel was for Mar Shalmon, his father.

"I am the son of Mar Shalmon," he said. "My father is dead, and all his possessions he left to me."

"Then, verily, art thou the most fortunate mortal, and the richest, on earth," answered the captain. "My good ship is filled with a vast store of jewels, precious stones and other treasures. And know you, O most favored son of Mar Shalmon, this cargo is but a small portion of the wealth that is thine in a land across the sea."

"'Tis strange," said Bar Shalmon, in surprise; "my father said nought of this to me. I knew that in his younger days he had traded with distant lands, but nothing did he ever say of possessions there. And, moreover, he warned me never to leave this shore."

The captain looked perplexed.

"I understand it not," he said. "I am but performing my father's bidding. He was thy father's servant, and long years did he wait for Mar Shalmon's return to claim his riches. On his deathbed he bade me vow that I would seek his master, or his son, and this have I done."

He produced documents, and there could be no doubt that the vast wealth mentioned in them belonged now to Bar Shalmon.

"Thou art now my master," said the captain, "and must return with me to the land across the sea to claim thine inheritance. In another year it will be too late, for by the laws of the country it will be forfeit."

"I cannot return with thee," said Bar Shalmon. "I have a vow before heaven never to voyage on the sea."

The captain laughed.

"In very truth, I understand thee not, as my father understood not thine," he replied. "My father was wont to say that Mar Shalmon was strange and peradventure not possessed of all his senses to neglect his store of wealth and treasure."

With an angry gesture Bar Shalmon stopped the captain, but he was sorely troubled. He re-called now that his father had often spoken mysteriously of foreign lands, and he wondered, indeed, whether Mar Shalmon could have been in his proper senses not to have breathed a word of his riches abroad. For days he discussed the matter with the captain, who at last persuaded him to make the journey.

"Fear not thy vow," said the captain. "Thy worthy father must, of a truth, have been bereft of reason in failing to tell thee of his full estate, and an oath to a man of mind unsound is not binding. That is the law in our land."

"So it is here," returned Bar Shalmon, and with this remark his last scruple vanished.

He bade a tender farewell to his wife, his child, and his friends, and set sail on the strange ship to the land beyond the sea.

For three days all went well, but on the fourth the ship was becalmed and the sails flapped lazily against the masts. The sailors had nothing to do but lie on deck and wait for a breeze, and Bar Shalmon took advantage of the occasion to treat them to a feast.

Suddenly, in the midst of the feasting, they felt the ship begin to move. There was no wind, but the vessel sped along very swiftly. The captain himself rushed to the helm. To his alarm he found the vessel beyond control.

"The ship is bewitched," he exclaimed. "There is no wind, and no current, and yet we are being borne along as if driven before a storm. We shall be lost."

Panic seized the sailors, and Bar Shalmon was unable to pacify them.

"Someone on board has brought us ill-luck," said the boatswain, looking pointedly at Bar Shalmon; "we shall have to heave him over-board."

His comrades assented and rushed toward Bar Shalmon.

Just at that moment, however, the look-out in the bow cried excitedly, "Land ahead!"

The ship still refused to answer the helm and grounded on a sandbank. She shivered from stem to stern but did not break up. No rocks were visible, only a desolate tract of desert land was to be seen, with here and there a solitary tree.

"We seem to have sustained no damage," said the captain, when he had recovered from his first astonishment, "but how we are going to get afloat again I do not know. This land is quite strange to me."

He could not find it marked on any of his charts or maps, and the sailors stood looking gloomily at the mysterious shore.

"Had we not better explore the land?" said Bar Shalmon.

"No, no," exclaimed the boatswain, excitedly. "See, no breakers strike on the shore. This is not a human land. This is a domain of demons. We are lost unless we cast overboard the one who has brought on us this ill-luck."

Said Bar Shalmon, "I will land, and I will give fifty silver crowns to all who land with me."

Not one of the sailors moved, however, even when he offered fifty golden crowns, and at last Bar Shalmon said he would land alone, although the captain strongly urged him not to do so.

Bar Shalmon sprang lightly to the shore, and as he did so the ship shook violently.

"What did I tell you?" shouted the boat-swain. "Bar Shalmon is the one who has brought us this misfortune. Now we shall re-float the ship."

But it still remained firmly fixed on the sand. Bar Shalmon walked towards a tree and climbed it. In a few moments he returned, holding a twig in his hand.

"The land stretches away for miles just as you see it here," he called to the captain. "There is no sign of man or habitation."

He prepared to board the vessel again, but the sailors would not allow him. The boatswain stood in the bow and threatened him with a sword. Bar Shalmon raised the twig to ward off the blow and struck the ship which shivered from stem to stern again.

"Is not this proof that the vessel is bewitched?" cried the sailors, and when the captain sternly bade them remember that Bar Shalmon was their master, they threatened him too.

Bar Shalmon, amused at the fears of the men, again struck the vessel with the twig. Once more it trembled. A third time he raised the twig.

"If the ship is bewitched," he said, "something will happen after the third blow."

"Swish" sounded the branch through the air, and the third blow fell on the vessel's bow. Something did happen. The ship almost leaped from the sand, and before Bar Shalmon could realize what had happened it was speeding swiftly away.

"Come back, come back," he screamed, and he could see the captain struggling with the helm. But the vessel refused to answer, and Bar Shalmon saw it grow smaller and smaller and finally disappear. He was alone on an uninhabited desert land.

"What a wretched plight for the richest man in the world," he said to himself, and the next moment he realized that he was in danger indeed.

A terrible roar made him look around. To his horror he saw a lion making toward him. As quick as a flash Bar Shalmon ran to the tree and hastily scrambled into the branches. The lion dashed itself furiously against the trunk of the tree, but, for the present, Bar Shalmon was safe. Night, however, was coming on, and the lion squatted at the foot of the tree, evidently intending to wait for him. All night the lion

remained, roaring at intervals, and Bar Shalmon clung to one of the upper branches afraid to sleep lest he should fall off and be devoured. When morning broke, a new danger threatened him. A huge eagle flew round the tree and darted at him with its cruel beak. Then the great bird settled on the thickest branch, and Bar Shalmon moved stealthily forward with a knife which he drew from his belt. He crept behind the bird, but as he approached it spread its big wings, and Bar Shalmon, to prevent himself being swept from the tree, dropped the knife and clutched at the bird's feathers. Immediately, to his dismay, the bird rose from the tree. Bar Shalmon clung to its back with all his might.

Higher and higher soared the eagle until the trees below looked like mere dots on the land. Swiftly flew the eagle over miles and miles of desert until Bar Shalmon began to feel giddy. He was faint with hunger and feared that he would not be able to retain his hold. All day the bird flew without resting, across island and sea. No houses, no ships, no human beings could be seen. Toward night, however, Bar Shalmon, to his great joy, beheld the lights of a city surrounded by trees, and as the eagle came near, he made a bold dive to the earth. Headlong he plunged downward. He seemed to be hours in falling. At last he struck a tree. The branches broke beneath the weight and force of his falling body, and he continued to plunge downward. The branches tore his clothes to shreds and bruised his body, but they broke his terrible fall, and when at last he reached the ground he was not much hurt.

## II

Bar Shalmon found himself on the outskirts of the city, and cautiously he crept forward. To his intense relief, he saw that the first building was a synagogue. The door, however, was locked. Weary, sore, and weak with long fasting, Bar Shalmon sank down on the steps and sobbed like a child.

Something touched him on the arm. He looked up. By the light of the moon he saw a boy standing before him. Such a queer boy he was, too. He had cloven feet, and his coat, if it was a coat, seemed to be made in the shape of wings.

"*Ivri Onochi*," said Bar Shalmon, "I am a Hebrew."

"So am I," said the boy. "Follow me."

He walked in front with a strange hobble, and when they reached a house at the back of the synagogue, he leaped from the ground, spreading his coat wings as he did so, to a window about

twenty feet from the ground. The next moment a door opened, and Bar Shalmon, to his surprise, saw that the boy had jumped straight through the window down to the door which he had unfastened from the inside. The boy motioned him to enter a room. He did so. An aged man, who he saw was a rabbi, rose to greet him.

"Peace be with you," said the rabbi, and pointed to a seat. He clapped his hand and immediately a table with food appeared before Bar Shalmon. The latter was far too hungry to ask any questions just then, and the rabbi was silent, too, while he ate. When he had finished, the rabbi clapped his hands and the table vanished.

"Now tell me your story," said the rabbi. Bar Shalmon did so.

"Alas! I am an unhappy man," he concluded. "I have been punished for breaking my vow. Help me to return to my home. I will reward thee well, and will atone for my sin."

"Thy story is indeed sad," said the rabbi, gravely, "but thou knowest not the full extent of thy unfortunate plight. Art thou aware what land it is into which thou hast been cast?"

"No," said Bar Shalmon, becoming afraid again.

"Know then," said the rabbi, "thou art not in a land of human beings. Thou hast fallen into Ergetz, the land of demons, of djinns, and of fairies."

"But art thou not a Jew?" asked Bar Shalmon, in astonishment.

"Truly," replied the rabbi. "Even in this realm we have all manner of religions just as you mortals have."

"What will happen to me?" asked Bar Shalmon, in a whisper.

"I know not," replied the rabbi. "Few mortals come here, and mostly, I fear they are put to death. The demons love them not."

"Woe, woe is me," cried Bar Shalmon, "I am undone."

"Weep not," said the rabbi. "I, as a Jew, love not death by violence and torture, and will endeavor to save thee."

"I thank thee," cried Bar Shalmon.

"Let thy thanks wait," said the rabbi, kindly. "There is human blood in my veins. My great-grandfather was a mortal who fell into this land and was not put to death. Being of mortal descent, I have been made rabbi. Perhaps thou wilt find favor here and be permitted to live and settle in this land."

"But I desire to return home," said Bar Shalmon.

The rabbi shook his head.

"Thou must sleep now," he said.

He passed his hands over Bar Shalmon's eyes and he fell into a profound slumber. When he awoke it was daylight, and the boy stood by his couch. He made a sign to Bar Shalmon to follow, and through an underground passage he conducted him into the synagogue and placed him near the rabbi.

"Thy presence has become known," whispered the rabbi, and even as he spoke a great noise was heard. It was like the wild chattering of many high-pitched voices. Through all the windows and the doors a strange crowd poured into the synagogue. There were demons of all shapes and sizes. Some had big bodies with tiny heads, others huge heads and quaint little bodies. Some had great staring eyes, others had long wide mouths, and many had only one leg each. They surrounded Bar Shalmon with threatening gestures and noises. The rabbi ascended the pulpit.

"Silence!" he commanded, and immediately the noise ceased. "Ye who thirst for mortal blood, desecrate not this holy building wherein I am master. What ye have to say must wait until after the morning service."

Silently and patiently they waited, sitting in all manner of queer places. Some of them perched on the backs of the seats, a few clung like great big flies to the pillars, others sat on the window-sills, and several of the tiniest hung from the rafters in the ceiling. As soon as the service was over, the clamor broke out anew.

"Give to us the perjurer," screamed the demons. "He is not fit to live."

With some difficulty, the rabbi stilled the tumult, and said:

"Listen unto me, ye demons and sprites of the land of Ergetz. This man has fallen into my hands, and I am responsible for him. Our king, Ashmedai, must know of his arrival. We must not condemn a man unheard. Let us petition the king to grant him a fair trial."

After some demur, the demons agreed to this proposal, and they trooped out of the synagogue in the same peculiar manner in which they came.

Each was compelled to leave by the same door or window at which he entered.

Bar Shalmon was carried off to the palace of King Ashmedai, preceded and followed by a noisy crowd of demons and fairies. There seemed to be millions of them, all clattering and pointing at him. They hobbled and hopped over the ground, jumped into the air, sprang from housetop to housetop, made sudden appearances from holes in the ground and vanished through solid walls.

The palace was a vast building of white marble that seemed as delicate as lace work. It stood in a magnificent square where many beautiful fountains spouted jets of crystal water. King Ashmedai

came forth on the balcony, and at his appearance all the demons and fairies became silent and went down on their knees.

"What will ye with me?" he cried, in a voice of thunder, and the rabbi approached and bowed before his majesty.

"A mortal, a Jew, has fallen into my hands," he said, "and thy subjects crave for his blood. He is a perjurer, they say. Gracious majesty, I would petition for a trial."

"What manner of mortal is he?" asked Ashmedai.

Bar Shalmon stepped forward.

"Jump up here so I may see thee," commanded the king.

"Jump, jump," cried the crowd.

"I cannot," said Bar Shalmon, as he looked up at the balcony thirty feet above the ground. "Try," said the rabbi.

Bar Shalmon did try, and found, the moment he lifted his feet from the ground, that he was standing on the balcony.

"Neatly done," said the king. "I see thou art quick at learning."

"So my teachers always said," replied Bar Shalmon.

"A proper answer," said the king. "Thou art, then, a scholar."

"In my own land," returned Bar Shalmon, "men said I was great among the learned."

"So," said the king. "And canst thou impart the wisdom of man and of the human world to others?"

"I can," said Bar Shalmon.

"We shall see," said the king. "I have a son with a desire for such knowledge. If thou canst make him acquainted with thy store of learning, thy life shall be spared. The petition for a trial is granted."

The king waved his scepter and two slaves seized Bar Shalmon by the arms. He felt himself lifted from the balcony and carried swiftly through the air. Across the vast square the slaves flew with him, and when over the largest of the fountains they loosened their hold. Bar Shalmon thought he would fall into the fountain, but to his amazement he found himself standing on the roof of a building. By his side was the rabbi.

"Where are we?" asked Bar Shalmon. "I feel bewildered."

"We are at the Court of Justice, one hundred miles from the palace," replied the rabbi.

A door appeared before them. They stepped through, and found themselves in a beautiful hall. Three judges in red robes and purple wigs were seated on a platform, and an immense crowd filled the galleries in the same queer way as in the synagogue. Bar Shalmon was placed on a small platform in front of the judges. A tiny sprite, only about six inches high, stood on another small platform at his right hand and commenced to read from a scroll that seemed to have no ending. He read the whole account of Bar Shalmon's life. Not one little event was missing.

"The charge against Bar Shalmon, the mortal," the sprite concluded, "is that he has violated the solemn oath sworn at his father's death-bed."

Then the rabbi pleaded for him and declared that the oath was not binding because Bar Shalmon's father had not informed him of his treasures abroad and could not therefore have been in his right senses. Further, he added, Bar Shalmon was a scholar and the king desired him to teach his wisdom to the crown prince.

The chief justice rose to pronounce sentence.

"Bar Shalmon," he said, "rightly thou shouldst die for thy broken oath. It is a grievous sin. But there is the doubt that thy father may not have been in his right mind. Therefore, thy life shall be spared."

Bar Shalmon expressed his thanks.

"When may I return to my home?" he asked. "Never," replied the chief justice.

Bar Shalmon left the court, feeling very downhearted. He was safe now. The demons dared not molest him, but he longed to return to his home.

"How am I to get back to the palace?" he asked the rabbi. "Perhaps after I have imparted my learning to the crown prince, the king will allow me to return to my native land."

"That I cannot say. Come, fly with me," said the rabbi.

"Fly!"

"Yes; see thou hast wings."

Bar Shalmon noticed that he was now wearing a garment just like all the demons. When he spread his arms, he found he could fly, and he sailed swiftly through the air to the palace. With these wings, he thought, he would be able to fly home.

"Think not that," said the rabbi, who seemed to be able to read his thoughts, "for thy wings are useless beyond this land."

Bar Shalmon found that it would be best for him to carry out his instructions for the present, and he set himself diligently to teach the crown prince. The prince was an apt pupil, and the two became great friends. King Ashmedai was delighted and made Bar Shalmon one of his favorites.

One day the king said to him: "I am about to leave the city for a while to undertake a campaign against a rebellious tribe of demons thousands of miles away. I must take the crown prince with me. I leave thee in charge of the palace."

The king gave him a huge bunch of keys.

"These," he said, "will admit into all but one of the thousand rooms in the palace. For that one there is no key, and thou must not enter it. Beware."

For several days Bar Shalmon amused himself by examining the hundreds of rooms in the vast palace until one day he came to the door for which he had no key. He forgot the king's warning and his promise to obey.

"Open this door for me," he said to his attendants, but they replied that they could not.

"You must," he said angrily, "burst it open."

"We do not know how to burst open a door," they said. "We are not mortal. If we were permitted to enter the room we should just walk through the walls."

Bar Shalmon could not do this, so he put his shoulder to the door and it yielded quite easily.

A strange sight met his gaze. A beautiful woman, the most beautiful he had ever seen, was seated on a throne of gold, surrounded by fairy attendants who vanished the moment he entered.

"Who art thou?" asked Bar Shalmon, in great astonishment.

"The daughter of the king," replied the princess, "and thy future wife."

"Indeed! How know you that?" he asked.

"Thou hast broken thy promise to my father, the king, not to enter this room," she replied.

"Therefore, thou must die, unless--"

"Tell me quickly," interrupted Bar Shalmon, turning pale, "how my life can be saved."

"Thou must ask my father for my hand," replied the princess. "Only by becoming my husband canst thou be saved."

"But I have a wife and child in my native land," said Bar Shalmon, sorely troubled.

"Thou hast now forfeited thy hopes of return," said the princess, slowly. "Once more hast thou broken a promise. It seems to come easy to thee now."

Bar Shalmon had no wish to die, and he waited, in fear and trembling for the king's re-turn. Immediately he heard of King Ashmedai's approach, he hastened to meet him and flung himself on the ground at his majesty's feet.

"O King," he cried, "I have seen thy daughter, the princess, and I desire to make her my wife."

"I cannot refuse," returned the king. "Such is our law--that he who first sees the princess must become her husband, or die. But, have a care, Bar Shalmon. Thou must swear to love and be faithful ever."

"I swear," said Bar Shalmon.

The wedding took place with much ceremony. The princess was attended by a thousand fairy bridesmaids, and the whole city was brilliantly decorated and illuminated until Bar Shalmon was almost blinded by the dazzling spectacle.

The rabbi performed the marriage ceremony, and Bar Shalmon had to swear an oath by word of mouth and in writing that he loved the princess and would never desert her. He was given a beautiful palace full of jewels as a dowry, and the wedding festivities lasted six months. All the fairies and demons invited them in turn; they had to attend banquets and parties and dances in grottoes and caves and in the depths of the fairy fountains in the square. Never before in Ergetz had there been such elaborate rejoicings.

### III

Some years rolled by and still Bar Shalmon thought of his native land. One day the princess found him weeping quietly.

"Why art thou sad, husband mine?" she asked. "Dost thou no longer love me, and am I not beautiful now?"

"No, it is not that," he said, but for a long time he refused to say more. At last he confessed that he had an intense longing to see his home again.

"But thou art bound to me by an oath," said the princess.

"I know," replied Bar Shalmon, "and I shall not break it. Permit me to visit my home for a brief while, and I will return and prove myself more devoted to thee than ever."

On these conditions, the princess agreed that he should take leave for a whole year. A big, black demon flew swiftly with him to his native city.

No sooner had Bar Shalmon placed his feet on the ground than he determined not to return to the land of Ergetz.

"Tell thy royal mistress," he said to the demon, "that I shall never return to her."

He tore his clothes to make himself look poor, but his wife was overjoyed to see him. She had mourned him as dead. He did not tell of his adventures, but merely said he had been shipwrecked and had worked his way back as a poor sailor. He was delighted to be among human beings again, to hear his own language and to see solid buildings that did not appear and disappear just when they pleased, and as the days passed he began to think his adventures in fairyland were but a dream.

Meanwhile, the princess waited patiently until the year was ended.

Then she sent the big, black demon to bring Bar Shalmon back.

Bar Shalmon met the messenger one night when walking alone in his garden.

"I have come to take thee back," said the demon.

Bar Shalmon was startled. He had forgotten that the year was up. He felt that he was lost, but as the demon did not seize him by force, he saw that there was a possibility of escape.

"Return and tell thy mistress I refuse," he said.

"I will take thee by force," said the demon. "Thou canst not," Bar Shalmon said, "for I am the son-in-law of the king."

The demon was helpless and returned to Ergetz alone.

King Ashmedai was very angry, but the princess counseled patience.

"I will devise means to bring my husband back," she said. "I will send other messengers."

Thus it was that Bar Shalmon found a troupe of beautiful fairies in the garden the next evening. They tried their utmost to induce him to return with them, but he would not listen. Every day different messengers came--big, ugly demons who threatened, pretty fairies who tried to coax him, and troublesome sprites and goblins who only annoyed him. Bar Shalmon could not move without encountering messengers from the princess in all manner of queer places. Nobody else could see them, and often he was heard talking to invisible people. His friends began to regard him as strange in his behavior.

King Ashmedai grew angrier every day, and he threatened to go for Bar Shalmon himself.

"Nay, I will go," said the princess; "it will be impossible for my husband to resist me."

She selected a large number of attendants, and the swift flight of the princess and her retinue through the air caused a violent storm to rage over the lands they crossed. Like a thick black cloud they swooped down on the land where Bar Shalmon dwelt, and their weird cries seemed like the wild shrieking of a mighty hurricane. Down they swept in a tremendous storm such as the city had never known. Then, as quickly as it came, the storm ceased, and the people who had fled into their houses, ventured forth again.

The little son of Bar Shalmon went out into the garden, but quickly rushed back into the house.

"Father, come forth and see," he cried. "The garden is full of strange creatures brought by the storm. All manner of creeping, crawling things have invaded the garden--lizards, toads, and myriads of insects. The trees, the shrubs, the paths are covered, and some shine in the twilight like tiny lanterns."

Bar Shalmon went out into the garden, but he did not see toads and lizards. What he beheld was a vast array of demons and goblins and sprites, and in a rose-bush the princess, his wife, shining like a star, surrounded by her attendant fairies. She stretched forth her arms to him.

"Husband mine," she pleaded, "I have come to implore thee to return to the land of Ergetz with me. Sadly have I missed thee; long have I waited for thy coming, and difficult has it been to appease my father's anger. Come, husband mine, return with me; a great welcome awaits thee."

"I will not return," said Bar Shalmon.

"Kill him, kill him," shrieked the demons, and they surrounded him, gesticulating fiercely. "Nay, harm him not," commanded the princess. "Think well, Bar Shalmon, ere you answer again. The sun has set and night is upon us. Think well, until sunrise. Come to me, return, and all shall be well. Refuse, and thou shalt be dealt with as thou hast merited. Think well before the sunrise."

"And what will happen at sunrise, if I refuse?" asked Bar Shalmon.

"Thou shalt see," returned the princess. "Bethink thee well, and remember, I await thee here until the sunrise."

"I have answered; I defy thee," said Bar Shalmon, and he went indoors.

Night passed with strange, mournful music in the garden, and the sun rose in its glory and spread its golden beams over the city. And with the coming of the light, more strange sounds woke the people of the city. A wondrous sight met their gaze in the market place. It was filled with hundreds upon hundreds of the queerest creatures they had ever seen, goblins and brownies, demons and fairies. Dainty little elves ran about the square to the delight of the children, and quaint sprites clambered up the lampposts and squatted on the gables of the council house. On the steps of that building was a glittering array of fairies and attendant genii, and in their midst stood the princess, a dazzling vision, radiant as the dawn.

The mayor of the city knew not what to do. He put on his chain of office and made a long speech of welcome to the princess.

"Thank you for your cordial welcome," said the princess, in reply, "and you the mayor, and ye the good people of this city of mortals, hearken unto me. I am the princess of the Fairyland of Ergetz where my father, Ashmedai, rules as king. There is one among ye who is my husband."

"Who is he?" the crowd asked in astonishment.

"Bar Shalmon is his name," replied the princess, "and to him am I bound by vows that may not be broken."

"'Tis false," cried Bar Shalmon from the crowd.

"'Tis true. Behold our son," answered the princess, and there stepped forward a dainty elfin boy whose face was the image of Bar Shalmon.

"I ask of you mortals of the city," the princess continued, "but one thing, justice--that same justice which we in the land of Ergetz did give unto Bar Shalmon when, after breaking his oath unto his father, he set sail for a foreign land and was delivered into our hands. We spared his life; we granted his petition for a new trial. I but ask that ye should grant me the same petition. Hear me in your Court of Justice."

"Thy request is but reasonable, princess," said the mayor. "It shall not be said that strangers here are refused justice. Bar Shalmon, follow me."

He led the way into the Chamber of Justice, and the magistrates of the city heard all that the princess and her witnesses, among whom was the rabbi, and also all that Bar Shalmon, had to say.

"'Tis plain," said the mayor, delivering judgment, "that her royal highness, the princess of the Fairyland of Ergetz, has spoken that which is true. But Bar Shalmon has in this city wife and child to whom he is bound by ties that may not be broken. Bar Shalmon must divorce the princess and return unto her the dowry received by him on their marriage."

"If such be your law, I am content," said the princess.

"What sayest thou, Bar Shalmon?" asked the mayor.

"Oh! I'm content," he answered gruffly. "I agree to anything that will rid me of the demon princess."

The princess flushed crimson with shame and rage at these cruel words.

"These words I have not deserved," she exclaimed, proudly. "I have loved thee, and have been faithful unto thee, Bar Shalmon. I accept the decree of your laws and shall return to the land of Ergetz a widow. I ask not for your pity. I ask but for that which is my right, one last kiss."

"Very well," said Bar Shalmon, still more gruffly, "anything to have done with thee."

The princess stepped proudly forward to him and kissed him on the lips.

Bar Shalmon turned deadly pale and would have fallen had not his friends caught him.

"Take thy punishment for all thy sins," cried the princess, haughtily, "for thy broken vows and thy false promises--thy perjury to thy God, to thy father, to my father and to me."

As she spoke Bar Shalmon fell dead at her feet. At a sign from the princess, her retinue of fairies and demons flew out of the building and up into the air with their royal mistress in their midst and vanished.