

***King Marc is dedicated to Dr. Mark Bohling, DVM at the University of Tennessee for all his hard work and dedication to collapsing trachea.***

# ***King Marc***

***By***

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***King Marc and Queen Karyn were in the castle's master chamber. Queen Karyn was fraught with worry over the disappearance of Prince Kristopher, and the handsome King was trying his best to calm his wife, "My love, it will be alright, we will find Prince Kristopher. I will gather my men, and we will scour the land until we find the Prince, and I give you my word I will bring our son home safely to you." King Marc gathered his Queen in his arms and gave her a long reassuring hug. "All will be well", he whispered in her ear. Queen Karyn looked up into her husband's face and stroked the side of his cheek, "I don't know what I would do without you, my dear husband!" King Marc kissed his wife, and said "Nor would I know what to do without you, my beloved. Now go, and tell the staff to prepare for our departure." Queen Karyn nodded and left the chambers to do as her husband bade..***

***King Marc ran his hands through his thick brown hair. He was a strong but gentle man, with kind brown eyes. His voice was soft, yet he spoke with assurance. His subjects loved him dearly and all would lay down their lives for their good-hearted master. Not only was he ruler of his kingdom, he was a healer as well. He and his beloved Queen filled their days helping to make others well. Today though, the King's brow was creased with lines of worry. He knew he had to find the Prince, and he had to find him fast. Word had spread throughout the land, that dogs were mysteriously disappearing without a trace. The King shook himself out of his reverie, and turned to don on warmer clothing to prepare for his ride. He had no idea how long he would be gone, and the night air would chill them to the bone. He quickly got himself together, and turned to leave the room with the air of one who had a mission to accomplish.***

***The King's soldiers waited in the stable for their master. Each was busy tending to their horses and preparing for the ride ahead. They knew that they could not fail in their mission – they had to find the Prince. The horses were magnificent creatures that sensed the***

***urgency, and their whinnies, snorts, and restlessness filled the stable.***

***King Marc and his head knight Lancer stood talking just outside the stable door. Lancer had done his work and word was that the Evil Ludwig was the culprit behind the Prince's disappearance. The King nodded in agreement as Knight Lancer recommended they make their first stop in the village of Mill, just outside of where the Evil Ludwig was said to dwell. Knight Lancer turned and walked into the stable and faced the waiting soldiers and ordered "Mount Up, the King is here." The soldiers mounted and the horses moved out of the stable two by two eagerly looking moving forward to the road that awaited them across the drawbridge.***

***Several hours passed as the journey led the King and his soldiers across grassy fields, through the forest, and across a meandering river. The splash of water against the horse's legs made a rushing sound as they moved cautiously through the water to the other side. The village of Mill was distinctly faint on the horizon. The King held up his arm, "We will stay here the night, and at first dawn's light, we will visit the Evil Ludwig home. The King dismounted his huge black stallion Arimus, and gently stroked the horse's neck before one of the soldiers took the reins from the King's hand. The King walked a distance from his men, and looked out on the horizon toward the village, where he hoped he would find his son, Prince Kristopher. Anger welled up in him as he thought of the Evil Ludwig and the harm that may have come to his son. The King said softly to no one "Evil Ludwig, you will regret the day you stole the Prince from my kingdom." The King turned as he heard the heavy noise of approaching horses. King Marc recognized the bright colors of the approaching entourage, and moved forward to greet his old friend Prince Ian. Prince Ian jumped off his stallion and greeted King Marc with a hug and back slap.***

***Prince Ian and the King sat distanced off from their soldiers. King Marc told Prince Ian about the disappearance of Prince Kristopher, and Prince Ian had decided to join forces and help the King find his son.***

***Dawn soon approached, and the group began to stir. The soldiers scurried about preparing the morning meal and clearing up their makeshift camp before heading out to the home of the Evil Ludwig. The plot was to hit Ludwig's home just as the sun was beginning to rise.***

***Prince Ian and King Marc accompanied by Knight Lancer headed up the entourage. The silence was ominous as they guided their horses***

***up the road, careful to be as quiet as possible. Each plod of their horse's step brought them closer to their destination.***

***Evil Ludwig's home was nothing more than a dilapidated house that was in severe disrepair. The neglect was apparent from the broken mortar and the holes in the thatched roof. The stench of filth and decay filled the air and the acridity brought tears to the soldier's eyes. Next to the home was a huge barn, and the soldiers could hear the cries and whines from within. The King motioned his men toward the barn, and they swiftly entered through the barn door and found the Evil Ludwig poking and prodding some of the dogs that were imprisoned in cages. Several of the King and Prince's soldiers grabbed Ludwig and brought him in front of the King. The King looked Ludwig up and down, taking in his disheveled appearance, greasy hair, rotting teeth, and dirty clothing, and the bag of money hanging from a rope tied around his waste. The King grabbed Ludwig by the collar and brought him close, "Where is my son, Evil Ludwig?" Ludwig trembled, and was about to reply, when the King heard his son's voice, "Father, I am over here, please come help Kayla, she is not well." King Marc turned toward the sound of his son's voice and ordered his men to put the Evil Ludwig in a cage. "Ludwig, you shall receive the same punishment you have inflicted on these animals. You will spend 30 days in this cage, and my men will bring you dirty water and stale bread every third day. If you live, you will be free to go." King March pushed the Evil Ludwig away from him and handed him back to the soldiers. He then turned to help his son and Kayla. Several other yorkies were surrounding Kayla, whispering words of comfort.***

***The soldiers shoved Ludwig in a cage, then turned to free all the yorkies that were locked in other cages. The dogs were hesitant to come out, unsure if they were really being freed. Some were too sick to move, and laid in their cages, while others moved cautiously forward, their first step toward freedom. The King gave Prince Kristopher a big hug, and then turned to Kayla. He saw a bedraggled yorkie with the saddest eyes he had ever seen. He gently picked up Kayla, and reassured her that everything would be all right...they were safe now.***

***The King left two of his men behind to fill out his decree for the Evil Ludwig's banishment to live in a cage for 30 days. He turned to all the yorkies and told them, "You are free to go as you please or you are welcome to return to the castle with us, and we will tend to your ills and make you well again. All the yorkies clamored around the King, jumping up and showering him with kisses, and said "We will go with you, your Highness!!!!!"***

***The soldiers found an old wagon in the Evil Ludwig's barn, and gathered up the sickly yorkies that were too ill to move. The journey back to the castle was slow and took two days time. Prince Ian had accompanied the King back to the first night's camp and then parted ways to return to his Kingdom with the promise that he and his lovely wife Princess Anna would come to pay their respects to King Marc and Queen Karyn in a fortnight's time. The King and his men continued the next day's journey back to their own Kingdom. Everyone was tired as they spotted the castle on the horizon, but the pace stepped up as they eagerly moved towards home and the warm welcome they knew awaited them.***

***Prince Kristopher sat in front of his father atop the black stallion Arimus and began to wiggle as they got closer to the castle entrance. "Father, I am so glad to be coming home" whispered the Prince. King Marc ruffled the top of his son's head and promised "We are almost there!!" Once through the castle drawbridge, the servants began to scurry and help the entourage. Queen Karyn stood in the doorway, and picked up her skirts, as she made her way out into the courtyard. Running across the courtyard toward her was Prince Kristopher!!! Queen Karyn ran toward her son, and scooped him up in her arms. She twirled round and round as she covered Prince Kristopher's face in kisses, "My son, I am so happy to see you" as the tears of happiness ran down her cheeks. King Marc looked at his wife and son, and smiled at the scene before him, "They were home!!"***