

Rebekah Hainline

Mrs. Rutan

Creative Writing

5/22/2017

The Tale of the Saw Miller's Daughter

There once was a sorcerer whose heart was a smear of ash. He knew nothing but pain though he knew he wished for something different.

There once was a saw miller who owned a small stretch of land where he lived with his wife and four sons and youngest daughter. As he grew in age, his oldest son began to take over the work as his younger sons each left to find their fortunes. Soon it was only his wife, his oldest son, and his youngest daughter left to care for the business and the home.

One day the saw miller became bedridden and as the week passed, his condition slowly worsened. The oldest son, still living at home, rode into town as fast as he could to get a doctor to come and save their father. But when the doctor arrived he only brought poor news.

"I'm afraid," said the doctor. "Your father has been stricken with the heart blight."

When he showed the family the saw miller's heart it was thinly streaked with throbbing gray veins.

"When the blight consumes the heart it will turn black and your father will die, but there is no way to know when that will come to be."

"Tell us," said the saw miller's daughter. "How can we cure this?"

"I do not know the cure for the heart blight, though they say there may be someone who does. I do not know where to find them, nor if they truly exist."

The doctor left the family to mourn their father with only a tonic to ease his sufferings.

"There must be a cure," the saw miller's daughter cried.

"There may be a cure, but how would one find it, if it even exists? No. We must make preparations for his death to ensure he is as peaceful as possible," the saw miller's son said.

"I cannot accept this," said the saw miller's daughter. "I will go and find the blight's cure. You can take care of the saw mill and mother can take care of the house, but I have no place here. I will wander the land until I find the cure for the blight."

"Your father may die before you even find it, why must you go?" asked the saw miller's wife.

The saw miller's daughter took a piece of her heart and laid it gently on top of her father's

heart. The blight paled and shrunk, but only ever so slightly.

“This will help give me more time. If I don’t return before he dies, then there must be more who suffer from the blight, and I may not be late for them.”

The saw miller’s wife and son wrapped the daughter in their arms and cried.

“At least will you sleep and eat tonight and set off tomorrow morning?” they asked.

The saw miller’s daughter agreed, but in the middle of the night, she snuck away, taking only with her a coat, map, and a small bag of food. She looked at her map and began to head west, the direction she knew had the least peril.

There once was a thief whose heart was worn on his sleeve. There, people could see how dark and broken and vile it was. There, it kept them afraid.

The saw miller’s daughter walked for many days. At each town, she stopped and asked about the heart blight, but none knew of a cure, though many had seen its effects. Each time she thanked the villagers, restocked her food, and continued to head west.

One day, the saw miller’s daughter was walking through the woods when she came to a large, proud oak tree, as wide as a house and as tall as the clouds. However, the oak tree was bare, broken, and slowly dying. Mournful of the proud tree’s state, the saw miller’s daughter took a piece of her heart and laid it in the crack at the base of the tree. Immediately, the trunk turned a deep brown, the cracks grew together, and new leaves sprouted and bloomed as healthy as ever.

“Thank you,” said the tree to the saw miller’s daughter. “Please, is there anything I can do to repay you?”

“Dear tree, surely one as old and as wise as you knows where I can find the cure to the heart blight that my father suffers from,” said the saw miller’s daughter.

“I do, my dear. I have heard that the healer’s at the castle know the cure to heart blight.”

“Thank you. I will go at once.”

The tree wished her well and the saw miller’s daughter continued her journey, now to the King’s castle.

The deep forest gave way to a quaint village which gave way to a lavish kingdom with houses of gold and glass, and more finery than the saw miller’s daughter had ever seen. At the center stood the castle that seemed to shine as though it were made of diamonds and jewels, and the saw miller’s daughter was afraid to go near it, lest it turned out to be an illusion.

The saw miller’s daughter heard a rumor in the town that pieces of the princess’s heart had

been being stolen in the night and that no knight in the kingdom could find who was behind it. The king was offering to the person able to catch the thief anything he wished for, even the princess's hand in marriage and his entire kingdom. The saw miller's daughter saw her chance and requested an audience with the king.

"Your majesty, I'm here to catch the thief of your daughter's heart in return for your healer's to share with me the cure for the heart blight."

Now, the King knew that his healers did not have the cure for the heart blight, but he knew a saw miller's daughter would never be able to succeed where even his bravest knights had failed. He agreed to the deal and feed and washed and clothed the saw miller's daughter, and allowed her to wait in the castle, for he knew the thief would come again on the day of the new moon. Once night fell, the King lead the saw miller's daughter to the beautiful gardens outside the princess's window.

"Here you will wait until the thief arrives as he always does," the king said before he left her alone in the gardens.

The saw miller's daughter watched the princess's window steadily without pause until she heard a mournful cry down by the pond. The saw miller's daughter hurriedly rushed over, regretfully taking her eyes off the window. There, she found a swan that had been caught by a hunting arrow on accident. The swan's wing hung limply by its side, stained red as it wailed.

The saw miller's daughter gasped and pulled the swan from the water. She took a piece of her heart and placed it against the swan's wound. Immediately, the swan's flesh knitted back together, the feather's regrew, and returned to a brilliant white.

"Thank you," said the swan to the saw miller's daughter. "Please, is there anything I can do to repay you?"

"Dear swan, surely as one as vigilant and wary as you knows who has been stealing pieces of the princess's heart," said the saw miller's daughter.

"I do, my dear. It is an evil sorcerer who puts all who guard the princess to sleep and sneaks into her room to steal her heart. He lives in a castle deep in the south, further than even I have been able to follow him."

"Thank you. I will go at once."

"Dear girl, you must also know the King's healers to not have what you seek," the swan told her.

The saw miller's daughter, who had suspected as such, only nodded.

"Thank you, but I still must go."

The swan wished her well and the saw miller's daughter continued her journey, now south to the sorcerer's castle.

There once was a baby whose heart was safe in his chest. The baby would learn, however, the chest was not a safe place for a heart.

The saw miller's daughter walked for many days, but she knew not where the castle could be, so she continued to walk south until could no longer. In each village she stopped she asked if any knew of an evil sorcerer or a castle in the south, but none knew; she restocked her food and continued on.

As she was walking she reached a strong river that stretched as wide as three streets and extended as far as the eye could see to the east and the west. However, the river was dark and polluted with poison and toxins. The saw miller's daughter was so saddened by the sight of the strong river dying, so she took a piece of her heart and tossed it in the middle of the river. Immediately, the water current picked up and the water cleared and became pure.

"Thank you," said the river to the saw miller's daughter. "Please, is there anything I can do to repay you?"

"Dear river, surely as one as wide and vast as you knows where the evil sorcerer's castle is," said the saw miller's daughter.

"I do, my dear. If you follow my banks to the west, you will find the castle is a day's walk."

"Thank you. I will go at once."

The river wished her well and the saw miller's daughter continued her journey.

As the river had said, it took her only a day to find the sorcerer's castle. It was large but dark and broken and abandoned. Towers were crumbled and the land around it laid barren and dead. The saw miller's daughter steeled herself before entering the castle.

She walked the halls only to find it empty and in disarray. She dared not call out but continued her search throughout the entire castle. She found no sign that anyone lived in the castle, but she continued to search. Finally, she was left with only a single tower to search. She climbed the stairs slowly, straining for sound, but hearing nothing.

When the saw miller's daughter reached the top she saw the sorcerer seated at a table with the pieces of the princess's heart composed together in front of him. The sorcerer looked up at the saw miller's daughter, but she found he did not look evil - only miserable.

"Tell me, sorcerer. Why did you steal the princess's heart?" asked the saw miller's daughter.

The sorcerer showed the saw miller's daughter his heart, which was nothing more than a pile of ash in his chest.

"I wished to have a heart so that I might not hurt any longer. But even with the purest heart

I could find, I find myself only in more pain,” said the sorcerer.

The saw miller’s daughter, saddened by the sorcerer’s pain, took the last piece of her heart and placed it in the sorcerer’s ashes. Immediately, the ashes swirled and strengthened and grew until they once again became a heart.

“Thank you,” cried the sorcerer to the saw miller’s daughter. “Please, is there anything I can do to repay you?”

“Dear sorcerer, surely as one as powerful and knowledgeable as you knows the cure to the heart blight that my father suffers from,” said the saw miller’s daughter.

“I do, my dear. It is the water of a cleansed river, the feather of a healed swan, and the bark of saved tree.”

“Thank you. I must go at once.”

The sorcerer renounced his past, gave her back the princess’s heart, and wished her well.

There once was a thief who had a baby he did not want. He threw the baby in the fire, but the baby did not burn, for magic sung through his veins. Magic, however, did not save the baby’s heart from turning to ash.

The saw miller’s daughter started her journey back to the king’s castle, but first, she returned to the river.

“Please, dear river. May I have some water for the cure of the heart blight?” she asked.

The river gladly gave the saw miller’s daughter its water and in return the saw miller’s daughter told the river the cure to the heart blight so that it might spread it to all who ask.

The saw miller’s daughter returned to the king’s castle and requested an audience with the king. When she presented the king with the princess’s heart, he dropped to his knees in joy and sorrow.

“You have gifted me with what I most wish for, but I cannot give you what you asked for. We do not know the cure for the heart blight.”

“I know you do not, but I do,” said the saw miller’s daughter.

She gave him the princess’s heart and told him the cure for the heart blight so that he might spread it to all who ask. The saw miller’s daughter accepted the horse and clothes and food the king bestowed upon her, and she continued her journey back to her father’s home, but first, she returned to the swan.

“Please, dear swan. May I have a feather for the cure of the heart blight?” she asked.

The swan gladly gave the saw miller’s daughter its feather, and in return the saw miller’s daughter told the swan the cure to the heart blight so that it might spread it to all who ask.

The saw miller’s daughter passed through many towns as she journeyed home and in each village, she told the people the cure to the heart blight. She reigned a hero wherever she went. She hurried through village after village, knowing she might not have made it in time to save her father.

But first, she returned to the tree.

“Please, dear tree. May I have some bark for the cure of the heart blight?” she asked.

The tree gladly gave the saw miller’s daughter its bark and in return the saw miller’s daughter told the tree the cure to the heart blight so that it might spread it to all who ask.

The saw miller’s daughter returned to her father’s home with fear in her veins that she did not make it in time. She ran to her home with the cure in her hand and cried when she found her father still lying in bed. His heart was dark and throbbing, but he was still alive. The saw miller’s family crowded around the saw miller’s daughter and showered her with praise for her bravery.

The saw miller’s daughter laid the heart blight curse upon her father’s heart and the saw miller’s family were amazed to watch his heart turn from black back to red.

“Thank you,” cried the saw miller. “Please tell me, is there anything I can do to repay you?”

“If anyone asks, tell them the cure to the heart blight is the water of a cleansed river, the feather of a healed swan, and the bark of a saved tree. Tell all who asks and you will have repaid me, father.”

There once was a girl who gave away her heart till she no longer had one in her chest. She found she did not mind.