MAR-4'22

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When the Duke of Mercia died, the heir to his title and throne was his baby son. But the Duke had a brother-- Leofric, covetous, crafty and cruel. Leofric promised to make Lady Highbury his duchess if she removed the tiny heir. One day the little prince disappeared. Lady Highbury knew he was dead! Her deed crowned Leofric, but he only laughed at her for thinking he would wed her.

The Duke commanded John Dryer, the architect, to build a castle on the Ducal estate near the sea. One day he saw Dryer walking in the woods with lovely Godiva, daughter of the Mayor of Coventry. He coveted her young beauty, and when he learned she was betrothed to Dryer, he had the architect arrested on a false charge of disobeying the game laws.

Godiva was kept in a convent cell, and Dryer was tortured and threatened with death until Godiva agreed to wed Leofric. After the wedding the day came when the building of the castle was hampered by the imprisonment of its architect, so Dryer was released under guard until the task was finished.

Lady Godiva passed each day with errand of charity. The Jester pointed out how kind she was to all save Leofric. Clumisly the Duke sought to woo, but she fled from his drunken breath.

When Dryer's task was completed, he planned escape, but first he sought Godiva at the cloister at the hour when he knew she prayed. He urged her to flee. Leofric, hidden in the shadows, saw their meeting.

Dryer escaped and could not be found. The Duke ordered that every house in the town be burned if he was not found within

two days. Godiva's heart was torn in shreds with pity for the poor people, and she pleaded with the Duke for mercy. "But prove me what I would not do," she said. And from he answered, "Ride you naked through the town, and I'll repeal it."

When the people heard they entered their houses and shut the doors and barred the windows until she had passed by, "clothed on in chastity," and her glorious hair. But her sacrifice was in vain. Dryer heard, and came back, too late to save her shame. He was arrested and ordered beheaded.

To celebrate the completion of the new castle, Leofric opened its gates to the rich and great. So grim was his justice that Dryer's path to death led past the castle, where Godiva would have to witness her lover's fate.

But the Jester's mind, filled with hate for Leofric and pity for Godiva, had worked fast with cunning. At his bidding, workmen who hated the cruel Duke, worked fast with pick and ax, undermining the castle's foundation. When the tide of the sea came up, the Jester warned Godiva to flee to her father's house. He remained in the castle, entertaining the revellers with story and sung until the castle crumbled into the sea and all were lost.

With the death of the Duke, oppression ceased, the executioner stayed his sword, and thus Dryer's fate reversed. For him and Godiva, life began anew.

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