



Once upon a time, there was a king who had twin daughters.

One day, he called them and said to them, "I am now old and have thought of leaving my kingdom to one of you. In order to decide which of the two is the fairest for this important task, I have decided to put you through a test: whichever of you will bring me the most precious possession on earth will become my successor."

Although identical in appearance, the two sisters had very different characters. As soon as they heard it from their father, each of them began to think about what object, thought, or other thing to find that would meet the king's requests.

The first, Giacomina, thought of going to the neighbouring kingdom where the most beautiful jewellery in the world was made and ordered that a crown be made with the most precious stones.

"I wish that diamonds and rubies, emeralds and topazes were arranged as if to create a flower garden and that the crown would glow even in the dark!" The artisan goldsmiths set to work, sending their helpers to the four corners of the world to source the most beautiful and precious gems.

The second sister, Guglielmina, on the other hand, had gone down to the palace garden. Then suddenly, she spun around herself, her arms outstretched, wide open, laughing happily.

Days passed, but Guglielmina had not sought anything seemingly special; she had stayed in the garden or, reading a book looking out her window, or writing in her diary. Giacomina, on the other hand, came and went from the castle to check that the crown was coming just as she had imagined. And her expectations were not disappointed; the crown was not only the most beautiful that had ever been created but also the most precious. Giacomina thus thought that she already had victory in her pocket. Every now and then she would look out the door of her sister's room and see her quietly immersed in some of her reasoning, but nothing valuable and expensive, full of precious stones or metals, was to be seen around.

Thus, the day came. They both entered the great throne room where their father awaited them.



Giacomina had covered the crown with an embroidered velvet drape, which alone could have been worth her victory, because Guglielmina had nothing in her hand or around her.

“Well, my daughters, show us your gifts so that I may choose!” said the king looking lovingly at both his daughters.

Giacomina, with a slow move, studied thousands of times in the mirror in the previous days, slipped the fabric, and the hall was flooded with a phantasmagorical glitter and sparkle. Everyone, including the king, opened their mouths in amazement, saying in unison a great and only “OOOOOH!” Which filled Giacomina with pride who gloated in satisfaction almost ready to wear the crown, certain of victory.

“Dear Father,” said Guglielmina stepping forward, “the most precious good I bring to you is all around us: even if it cannot be seen.” Giacomina smiled and looked at her sister without even too much curiosity.

“I'd like you to close your nose with your fingers” The king obeyed. After a while he began to turn purple, and squint his eyes. “Breathe!” cried Guglielmina then.

Father finally drew a long breath. “The most precious possession I bring to you is the air that is all around us, that propels us, that turns the blades of mills that give us flour, that lifts up hot air balloons and simply kites, that flies and sustains aloft the birds that paint precious embroideries in the sky. The air propels the sails of our ships, carries our voices and the music of our musicians, and carries scents miles away. This is the precious good, without which none of us could live.”





Giacomina was still smiling as if it were a printed smile, she had not understood what her sister was talking about. The king, on the contrary, had understood very well and so he said, "The crown that you, Giacomina, have had made is certainly a beautiful and precious object but it is not something that is needed and that is essential, so I have decided that Guglielmina should lead my kingdom because air is really among the goods the most precious that we have and that we have to take care of so that we can continue to live on this wonderful planet of ours."

Giacomina, who had already put the crown on her head, wanted to dissent: "Nothing can be more precious than gold and diamonds!" she shouted out red-faced, and out of her spite she fell backwards into the fountain gushing in the middle of the hall. With the weight of the crown, her big head went to the bottom of the pool while her little legs flailed out, but she could not pull herself up. Under the water, because she was not a fish, she realised how true her sister's words were, and, taking the crown off her head she came out of the fountain repentant and happy. She immediately embraced her sister, bowing before her new queen.



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