

# **Don't Wake the King**

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The king was one of those people who didn't get much sleep at night, and as a result was one of those people who was terribly grumpy the next day. You may have met someone like this before and so know that they can be a bit annoying, but when that someone is a King, then they can be really annoying.

This particular King would always stay up late and so go past the best time to sleep, he would often just drift off into a very light sleep, only to wake up within an hour or less. And when he did wake up he would blame the first person he saw for causing him to wake up.

If you had just walked past the King then he would point and say 'it was you walking too loud that woke me up.' Once one of the servants was sewing in the next room when the king woke up, he saw this man sewing, pointed and shouted angrily 'you woke me up with your sewing you loud fool!'

You see lack of sleep will do that to you, make you very grumpy and often angry.

The King not being able to sleep at night like everyone else in the castle (apart from the night watchman of course), tried to sleep during the day, but couldn't because he had quite a few king-like things to do. For example people would come into his bed chamber and tell him he had an important visitor, or that an important paper needed to be signed, and the King being the King would have to do them. He was often so tired that he didn't really know what he was signing half the time, or what he was agreeing to, so therefore made some pretty big mistakes. Like buying one hundred and sixty very expensive suits of armour, when he only had ten knights, or agreeing to visit the caves where the fire-breathing Dragon lived to tell it to stop frightening people, or else! Lack of sleep makes you do some daft and even dangerous things.

Every time the King did get off to sleep whatever time of day or night it was, a message would go out to everyone in the walled city.

'Shhhhhh the King is sleeping .... shhhhhh don't wake the King.'

People in the walled city took it very seriously, because they knew how angry the King was when he was woken up. To avoid this they whispered to each other instead of talking, they wore soft soled slippers on their feet rather than ordinary shoes, and they even put soft leather covers over the horse's metal shoes.

Everything that you can imagine and some things you can't, was done to keep the city as quiet as possible, so as not to wake the king.

During one of the King's daytime sleepings, a stranger turned up at the walled city. Walking through the gates and noticing how quiet it was he shouted 'anyone home', immediately at least twenty people looked at him in horror and in their loudest whisper said 'shhhhh don't wake the King!'

The man, a travelling storyteller having spotted the turrets of the castle from a long way away had hoped that the people who lived in this city would be interested in his stories. He also hoped that they might even give him some food and a bit of money in exchange for listening to his stories, so he could then carry on with his journey.

The travelling storyteller, having never been shushed before by so many people, was surprised and intrigued to find out more. He asked the people who had shushed him 'is your King like sleeping beauty? Is there a prize of great riches for waking him up? Have you tried kissing him?'

'We don't want to wake him up you fool, we want him to sleep!' whispered one of the King's most trusted servants.

Oh! Whispered the storyteller still trying to help, 'have you tried patting his back as you carry him around?'

'He's not a baby you foolish stranger!' the King's servant whispered back angrily.

'Why isn't he able to go to sleep in the first place?' Whispered the travelling storyteller confused.

The servant told him that the King often stayed up late with his friends dancing and drinking wine, or counting his money until the early hours, and then worrying about his money and other things he owned being stolen, he also worried about things like not being popular, and of course not getting enough sleep, and being tired and making silly decisions, and so on and so on and so on.....

They all heard a huge shout and turned to see the King angry and awake standing on top of the castle, he was now pointing at the travelling storyteller 'oy you stranger' the king shouted 'you have woken me up you imbercile!'

'I'm sorry your majesty' the travelling storyteller shouted back, and was immediately shushed by everyone else.

'Bring him to me' the King ordered his guards pointing at the storyteller.

Soon the travelling storyteller was stood in front of the king explaining who he was and what he was doing in the walled city.

'I am but a poor storyteller your majesty, I travel around this kingdom and others, telling stories to entertain people, to bring them news and to teach them new things. People then give me a little food, clothing or even money for my efforts, which allows me to continue my journey' he said.

'Mmmm' said the King 'and what kind of stories do you tell exactly?'

The travelling storyteller smiled and said enthusiastically 'all kinds your majesty; adventure stories of my travels in far off lands, of mountains and valleys, of snow and ice, of heat and dust, stories of animals large and small, fierce and timid, stories of joy, fun and light. Stories of clever people, and stories of fools, and stories of kings and queens, stories to cheer people up, and stories to help people to sleep',

'Sleep you say!' exclaimed the King now very interested 'if you can tell me a story that can help me sleep it will certainly keep you out of my dungeon, and if your stories are very good then I may even give you a little money. You will tell me your best story now' demanded the King.

‘Certainly’ said the storyteller, ‘but before I do your majesty, please could I have some food and water? You see I have travelled a long way to your city and haven’t eaten since early this morning.’

‘Very well’ said the King and sent his servants to bring some food for the storyteller, who sat and ate it quite slowly because it was the best food he’d tasted for quite a while.

The storyteller realising that it was getting very late in the day, asked the King if there was somewhere in the castle he could sleep for the night in order be rested and ready to continue his journey the next day. The King keen to hear a story ordered that a bed be made for him in the servant’s quarters.

The storyteller thanked the King who now sat impatiently in his huge comfy King-chair waiting for his story. The storyteller started to tell the King a story of his journey to the city, the story the storyteller told was so vivid and lifelike that the King felt as though he was taking the very tiring journey him-self. The storyteller’s voice was so smooth and comforting that the King couldn’t help but fall asleep.

The next morning the storyteller was up, washed and dressed good and early, and ready to continue his journey. Before he could leave the castle he was told by a guard that the King had sent for the storyteller and he the guard was to take him. The storyteller stood before the King and immediately noticed that he looked a little healthier that last time he saw him, his eyes weren’t as red or puffy, his skin was less grey coloured and he seemed less angry.

The king looked at the storyteller and said ‘storyteller I had four hours unbroken sleep last night and I’m sure it has something to do with your story, so I want you to tell me another story again this evening. You will have your food the same as before, and then you will tell me a story, and I will sleep again.’

‘Your majesty’ said the storyteller ‘I would like to, but I have to tell stories to earn my living, and as I cannot tell my stories in your city, because they are often loud and full of laughter and everyone here has to stay so quiet, I must move on to another place.’

‘No’ said the King I need you here, sso here you must stay, I will give you money, food, a room in the castle, anything you want, just please tell me another story.’

The servants were amazed when they heard the King say please as they had never heard him say please to anyone before - ever.

The storyteller realised the King needed him and agreed to stay and tell him another story. That evening after his food, but before he told the King his story, he asked the King what he would usually do at that time instead of having a story. The King said ‘I often count my money, I have so much you see there isn’t enough time to count it during the day, and then I have to make sure its locked away safely in case anyone tries to steal it. I often have to check that it is locked properly, and then I check again and again.’

‘What do you do with all your money your majesty?’ the storyteller asked.

‘Do with it!..Do with it!!!’ Exclaimed the King. ‘I don’t do anything with it, I keep it locked safely away, and then I get it out and count it and count it again and again, and then I lock it safely away again.’

‘Oh!’ replied the Storyteller, and then told the King another story. This one was about a man who had already had a large number of possessions, but who still wanted more. The man in the story found that although he had a lot of money and possessions, he had very few friends, but in the end he found a way of making new friends and became much happier.

The next morning the storyteller was once again up, washed and dressed good and early ready to continue his journey. But once again before he could leave the castle he was told by a guard that the King had sent for the storyteller and he the guard was to take him. The storyteller once again stood before the King and immediately noticed that he looked even healthier than the day before, his eyes weren’t red or puffy at all, and his skin was starting to return to a much more natural and healthier colour and texture, and the King even seemed quite relaxed.

The king looked at the storyteller and said ‘storyteller I had five hours unbroken sleep last night and even had a nice dream and I’m sure it has something to do with the story you told me, so I want you to tell me another

story again this evening. You will have your food the same and then you will tell me a story and I will sleep again.’

Once again the storyteller said ‘your majesty I would like to but I have to earn my living and as I cannot tell my stories in your city because everyone has to stay so quiet, and my stories are often loud and full of laughter - so I must move on to another place.’

‘No’ said the King I need you here, you must stay, and if you do I will give you a large amount of money, food, a room in the castle, anything that you see in the city that you want you can have it, just please tell me another story.’

The servants were once again amazed when they heard this as they had never heard the King offer so much to anyone before - ever. And what was this about a dream?

The storyteller realised the King really needed him and agreed to stay and tell him yet another story. That evening after his food, but before he told the King his story he asked the King about his dream.

The King said ‘ah...the dream, I was walking around the walled city and my people were coming up to me and thanking me for being such a good King and ..’ the King hesitated.

‘And what?’ asked the storyteller.

‘I was with a woman who it seemed was my wife’ said the King blushing slightly as he said it. ‘But of course it was only a dream and although I want a wife how could I ever trust that a woman wouldn’t want to be my wife just because of all my money?’

The storyteller told the King another story, this time the story was about a very rich man who was looking for a wife and went to great lengths to check that the women he met weren’t just after him for his money. The story was exhausting for the King as he was thinking what he would have to do to get a wife who loved him for himself and not just his money. By the time the story was finished the King was fast asleep.

Early the next morning the storyteller was woken by the noise of loud footsteps, he then felt a large hand grab the front of his night shirt. He

quickly opened his sleepy eyes and realised he was staring straight at the pointed end of a sword which was being held by the King's guard.

'Get up!' the guard shouted angrily, 'you have killed the king and I've been instructed to take you to see his body before you are put into the dungeon.'

'But it's the middle of the night and I haven't been anywhere near the King' protested the storyteller.

'Silence!' ordered the guard as he marched the storyteller to the King's room at sword-point. When he got there he saw a number of the King's men standing around the King's bed.

'Look what you have done stranger' said one of the King's men 'you have killed our King, we wanted you to see what you have done before we put you in the dungeon. We never should have trusted a stranger to spend so much time with our King' he threw his hands up in the air and shouted 'oh what are we to do?'

As he did this the King opened his eyes and said 'who makes all this noise and dares to wake me up?'

The King's men were shocked and relieved as they stood around the King with their mouths open.

The King said 'Why are you pointing that sword at my Storyteller?'

They told the King that they thought he'd died.

'I was in deep sleep you fools' he said and ordered them out of his room.

Soon everyone in the castle went back to sleep.

A few hours later the storyteller once again was up, washed and dressed good and early, ready to finally continue his journey. But once again before he could leave the castle he was told by a guard that the King had once again sent for the storyteller and he the guard was to take him. The storyteller once again stood before the King and immediately noticed that he looked even healthier than the day before, his eyes were sparkling, his skin was looking very fresh, smooth and healthy.

The king looked at the storyteller and said 'storyteller even though I was rudely woken by my guards earlier this morning as were you. I still had

eight hours sleep last night, and the most wonderful dreams and I know it was to do with your story. Storyteller I know that you have to leave and continue with your travels, but before you do I want to give you the money I promised' The King signalled to one of his guards and they handed over a large bag filled with gold coins to the storyteller.

The storyteller thanked the King and before he could say anything else the King said 'I also said you could have anything you saw in the city, have you decided what that is to be?'

The storyteller nodded and said 'Your majesty I would like to have the square for one hour to tell some of my stories to your people, and to be as loud as I need to be.'

'Yes of course' said the King.

'Your majesty, there is one more thing' the storyteller said holding up the bag of gold coins 'I want to ask if I may be allowed to keep but two of these coins and give the rest away to the poor.'

Before the King could give his answer, the chief guard who had become quite jealous of the storyteller, and especially his huge bag of gold, spoke out angrily 'your majesty this man is a fool and an ungrateful one at that, he insults you by saying he is going to give your gold - royal gold to the poor. Shall I take him to the dungeons?'

The King laughed and looked at all the guards who were quite taken aback by his laughter.

'My dear fellow' said the King 'I have learned much from my stories and my dreams, and my long and healthy sleeps.

You see if the storyteller travels with his full bag of gold, which is far more than he will ever need, it will be heavy to carry, as he travels he will start to worry about his gold being stolen, he may not be able to sleep at night wondering if someone will take it while he's sleeping. He may also find that he makes not one new friend on his travels, because every new person he meets he thinks they may be a robber, if they become his friend, he may wonder if people are becoming his friend just because he has so much gold. He may buy lots of things with the gold and then worry about them being stolen, he may then stop his travels so he can watch over them all the time.

All because of the money he has saved. he may have no sleep, no friends and no happiness.’

When the King had finished the storyteller turned to him and said ‘Your majesty you have learned much from my stories.’

The King smiled and they both set off to the city square to tell their stories and to give away most of their money. That night they both slept soundly neither of them worrying or bothering about the following day as they both knew as long as they slept well it would take care of itself.

I am pleased to say that the king and the storyteller and everyone in the walled city slept happily ever after.

The End