



The Extraordinary Companions

Courage, Perseverance, Friendship

Having friends by your side will make every long journey easy.

This adventurous story is about a young man who travels to win the princess' heart. On his way to the castle, he meets brave helpers who help him to overcome the obstacles and difficult tasks that he meets...



🕒 21 min

😊 5+

Once upon a time, there was a kingdom **called Ripirapel**. It was ruled by a severe queen, who had a very beautiful daughter with long shining black hair. The stories of the princess's beauty had spread all around the world and lots and lots of suitors had come to the palace to ask for her hand.

None of them were successful, though. The queen didn't want to share her daughter with anyone else. She was very protective, and thought no one would be good enough or kind enough. So she kept giving the suitors incredibly difficult, practically impossible tasks.

Tasks like "Kill me a dragon!" or "Bring me a Woggerwomple!" When they failed, which they always did, she would have them **locked up in the darkest**, deepest dungeon in the castle.

One day, the stories of the beautiful princess reached the ears of a young prince from a kingdom so tiny that it didn't even have a name. The prince was very handsome and brave, though, and he got it into his head to win the princess's hand at all costs. His name was Bob.

The king - who was also tiny - of the tiny kingdom was very worried when he learned about his son's plans. He **sighed deeply** and warned his son:

"Many, many great and powerful kings from far-away lands have tried to win the hand of this princess, my dear boy. All of them have failed. Now they live their lives locked in a dark cell deep underneath the queen's castle.

Are you sure you're ready for this challenge? The princess's mother can be a cruel and devious woman, and she will not spare you if you fail." He sighed again, looking up at his son with fear for him.

But Prince Bob was a stubborn lad and nothing anyone said and no one could change his mind. He was determined to marry the princess, no matter what. So he set out on the long and arduous journey to meet the **bride of his dreams**.

The prince walked and walked, through unknown lands, over mountains and through forests, until one day he bumped into a man with a big, round belly like a barrel.

"Where are you heading, laddie?" asked the man.

"I'm going to Ripirapel to ask the princess to marry me!" The prince said. He looked at the man, who was wearing a tight leather vest, buttons bursting from his big belly. "And you? What's your name?"

"They call me Paunchy," the man said. "I've heard about that kingdom. Their tables break under the enormous piles of food they have! I've been dreaming about stuffing myself full with all their yummy goodies." He grinned, **slapping his huge potbelly** and imagining all of the royal food that he could possibly eat.

"My name's Prince Bob. Well, then why don't you join me? The more the merrier," suggested the prince.

He didn't have to ask Paunchy twice. They continued together, and soon they came across another interesting traveller. He was taller than a house and his legs were so long he could even jump over trees if he wanted.

"Ah, it's my good old friend Long Legs!" exclaimed Paunchy.

"Greetings, Long Legs!" Prince Bob called up to the man. "We're going to the kingdom of Ripirapel to ask the princess to marry me! You can join us if you want. You know what they say, the more the merrier."

Long Legs didn't need any persuading either and happily joined them. Before long, they met another man. This one was wearing a thick woollen cap and a fur coat over his shoulders. Even though it was quite a warm day, he was

shivering with cold.

“What happened, my good sir? Why are you shaking?” the prince asked with concern in his voice.

“I’m f-f-f-freezing. I’m carrying the cold of eight winters in me, you see. I’m chilled to the bone, and that’s why everyone calls me Frosty,” explained the man.

“Well, why don’t you come with us?” the prince asked. “The walking will keep you warm. We still have a long way to go.”

The third man, Frosty, agreed as well. They travelled over hill and dale, until they came across another strange man with a blindfold over his eyes.

“Excuse me, sir, I don’t mean to be rude, but why are you blindfolded?” asked the prince.

“I have a gift that is also my curse,” he replied. “My sight is so sharp it can turn huge mountains to ashes and dust if I look at them.”

The man’s name was Sharp Eye, and he also joined the prince’s company without hesitation. The four walked on together, and as they were climbing over a mountain, they came across a man who was lying on the path with one ear pressed to the ground. The prince was very confused.

“Excuse me,” the prince said, politely. “Who are you? And whatever are you doing on the ground?”

“I am Big Ear and right now, I’m listening to an argument between two kings on the other **side of the Earth.**” Because Big Ear had incredibly good hearing, you see. By pressing his ear to the ground, he could hear anything that was happening anywhere in the world. He could hear ants building a hill or even the footsteps of a thief from miles away.

“Well, that truly is an incredible skill!” the prince exclaimed. “Could you by any chance tell me what’s happening in the palace in Ripirapel?”

The man nodded and perked up his ears. After a while he said:

"I can hear **the queen's devilish laughter**. She's just thrown another suitor into the dungeon. Why do you ask?"

"I'm going to Ripirapel to ask the princess to marry me," the prince said. "Would you like to come along? The more the merrier!"

Before long, the group found themselves in front of the giant palace. They were approached by the royal guard and told them their reason for being there. The head guard nodded and signalled. Then the trumpeters **announced their arrival** and the company stepped before the queen.

The bold prince didn't hesitate for a second and said, "Your Majesty, I have come to ask for the hand of your beautiful daughter. These are my companions."

"Well, you must surely know that my daughter is the most beautiful woman in the world," the queen said. "To prove you are worthy of her, you will have to complete my tasks. If you fail, you will spend the rest of your life in my dungeons. I warn you, though. Many brave men have failed before you. There is still time to change your mind and leave," she warned, **laughing mockingly**.

But Prince Bob would not be intimidated. With determination in his eyes, he waited for the queen's instructions.

"Very well, boy, have it your way. Your first task is to eat ten bowls of potatoes, two roasted pigs, five rams, and drink five barrels of beer. Only one of your friends can help you," said the queen.

Once the prince was in the kitchens, he sent for Paunchy to help him. Before he knew it, all the food on the table was gone. There wasn't even a drop of gravy left on the plate! The prince thanked his dear friend, jumping for joy.

"Oh, no, thank you. I've never eaten so well in my life!" said Paunchy, **belching heartily**.

The queen was quite angry to see that the prince had completed the first task, and she immediately gave him another one: "Our sheep have escaped from the fold and now they're roaming all around our kingdom. You must catch them before sundown and bring them back. Again, you may ask only one friend to help you. If you fail, you know what fate awaits you." She tapped her long fingernails on her throne in irritation.

The prince immediately asked Long Legs for help. Thanks to his giant steps, they could get anywhere in a wink, and before the sun set, all the lost sheep had been returned and were **bleating happily in the fold**.

"So you have completed the second task as well... You are surprisingly capable, I must say," the queen admitted reluctantly when she saw the flock back in the fold. "But it's not over yet. I've lost a golden ring in the lake. If you want the princess, you will have to find it." She felt sure that this time, he would certainly fail.

This time, however, she forgot to mention how many friends he could bring along. The lake was tremendously deep, but as soon as Sharp Eye removed his blindfold and looked in the water, he saw something glittering at the bottom.

Then Long Legs stretched out his hand exactly where Sharp Eye told him, and soon enough he was holding the lost ring in his fingers. The prince was so excited! He could almost imagine himself at the **wedding festivities** with his beautiful bride!

"Well." The queen said, shocked and upset, as she took the ring from the young man. "You have successfully completed all the tasks I gave you. Your last task, then, is to guard the princess. You must watch her closely and stop anyone from getting near her or kidnapping her for a whole night. If you succeed, she'll be yours."

Prince Bob was absolutely thrilled! He was about to finally see the beautiful princess with his own eyes! He would guard her like a treasure and protect her with his life. He placed Long Legs in front of her window and Paunchy behind the door, though it was a tight fit.

The moment he saw her, he fell in love, and he positioned himself at the door and talked to the princess until she **fell asleep**. The prince was sure this had to be enough to prevent any trouble.

But the queen had **an evil plan**! At midnight she arrived and, humming a magical tune, lulled all three men to sleep. Then she kidnapped the princess, using her guards to take her to a secret cavern. She returned at sunrise and immediately woke the prince.

"Where is my daughter? She's missing! She was kidnapped right from under your nose! Go and find her as soon as possible, or you won't keep your head on your shoulders!" she yelled, slamming the door angrily **behind herself**.

The poor prince couldn't understand it, but the princess was really gone. He asked Big Ear to try and listen to see if he could hear her. His friend pressed his ear to the ground.

"Well, can you hear anything?" asked the prince impatiently.

"Yes... I can hear the princess crying and sobbing and saying: Why has my mother locked me up here? In this wet and dirty cave in the Iron Hill? I truly liked the brave prince..."

The prince was thrilled to hear these words. She liked him too! Before long, the six friends were on their way to the cave. Sharp Eye showed them the direction and Long Legs began to carry them all on his back.

Thanks to his giant leaps they soon arrived at the cave. Sharp Eye took off his blindfold and looked straight at the huge hill in front of them. Suddenly, they heard a terrible **rumbling noise**. Then the hillside cracked, with rocks crashing down and finally exposing the hidden cave. The trapped princess was saved! Triumphant, the whole company returned to the palace.

The queen, however, was not happy to see them. In fact, she was fuming, angered like never before. Her face was nearly purple with rage. She had never expected the prince to complete all her impossible tasks.

She didn't want to give her daughter to anyone at all. I must get rid of him! she thought, maliciously. I must do away with the prince and his blasted companions! I will burn them to a cinder! Immediately she sent her servants to heat up the royal sauna.

"You must be very tired after such a long journey," she said to the men, sweetly. "Go to the sauna. Relax a bit. Then we can start preparing the wedding."

They liked the idea very much and it didn't even cross their minds to be careful. As soon as they entered the sauna, **the door locked behind them.** The air was so hot it could melt stones and they all began to sweat.

They couldn't even breathe. Luckily, they had Frosty with them. He took a deep breath, and when he released it he let out one winter, then another, and another. Suddenly, it was nice and comfortable in the sauna. Sharp Eye took off his blindfold and turned the lock to dust.

The queen's evil plan had fallen through, and she reluctantly had to prepare the wedding after all. It was a spectacular affair. The whole kingdom made merry, and laughter and singing **echoed all around.** Long Legs danced and Paunchy ate, Frosty drank cold punch and Sharp Eye and Big Ear enjoyed the music.

After the wedding, the queen sent for horses and a carriage, and the newlyweds and their five friends set out for the prince's home - the teeny, tiny kingdom without a name.

But the queen still couldn't accept losing her beloved daughter, and she told her army to go after the wedding party, ordering the soldiers to catch the men, kill them, and bring the princess back safely.

As soon as Big Ear heard the queen's instructions, he hurried to Prince Bob to warn him. But the brave prince didn't fear the soldiers in the slightest and decided to continue on their way. Soon, they heard the **thunder of hooves and the clank of armour.** The prince turned to Sharp Eye: "Have a good look at them, my friend."

Sharp Eye took off his blindfold and fixed his gaze on the enormous army. Soon there wasn't a trace left of the soldiers, and the prince and his companions set off again.

When the queen learnt she had lost the whole army and with it all hope that she would ever see her daughter again, she flew into such a rage that she went mad, forgot **she was a queen**, and spent the rest of her life living alone in the cave she had put her daughter in the mountains.

The prince and the beautiful princess became the new rulers of Rhipirapel and immediately made their five loyal friends their royal advisers. They released all the failed suitors from the dungeon, and from that day on it was a happy kingdom, and everyone who lived there was **merry and content**.

It was an easy reign, indeed, with Big Ear hearing about every nasty plot, Sharp Eye defeating every attacking army and Paunchy eating any beast that ever tried to trouble the kingdom! And, of course, Long Legs took care of the **straying sheep**.