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# Inside the Fairy Tale: Will He or Won't He?

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## INSIDE THE FAIRY TALE: WILL HE OR WON'T HE?

The earth trembles. The Cinderlad stands appalled. His teeth are chattering like popcorn in a sack. The walls creak, the wind whistles in his ears, straw whips around his breast. Gripping a beam, he steadies and spits out the words, "If it grows no worse . . ."

In his mind, his eldest brother storms, "Exceptions are exceptions, not the rules!" Black eyes beneath black hood reprove him angrily. "Consider the probabilities! Remember, all is accident. I'm glad you escaped with your skin the last time. But don't imagine that's a pattern. Sensible men retreat strategically."

Was it ages or just two years ago, when trembling inside this very barn, the Cinderlad had said, "If it grows no worse, I can endure it"? That night the straw had only reach his knees. Then after the storm came a sudden peace, in a silent misty blanket on the fields.

To the sleeping pasture tiptoeing, the lad saw, orange in the rays of early dawn, a charger bending his mighty neck to graze, Richly caparisoned, and on his back a suit of copper armor, fit to bear the brunt of furious spears or equally entrance the perceptive eye of the realm's fair princess.

The Cinderlad, heartened, tightens his grip on the beam. ". . . I can--" but the wind outside is whistling and howling.

The barn rattles like sticks in a dray-cart and the straw flies over his head. Shuddering, Cinderlad stops and starts again, "Oh, If . . ."

*Did you really think it wouldn't get worse?*  
condoles  
his second brother. Blue eyes above loose jowls never quite meet his gaze. *Trouble is, you just don't think. Out of sight, out of mind, that's how it is with simpletons. Your brother and I, we scented trouble when the first tremor hit. So wisely we vamoosed at once. I'm glad You found a horse that time; Congratulations. Next time a bear will skewer you.*

Was it an age, or only a year ago, when quaking in this very barn, the Cinderlad had said, "If it grows no worse, I can endure it"? That night the straw had only reached his waist, but how his stomach had trembled and crawled! Then suddenly had come a poignant stillness Peace drifting down on swan's wings to the fields; A mighty steed was cropping the luscious green, His silver coat mirroring the glory of pale dawn. Richly caparisoned was he, and on his back he carried silver armor, worth twice the copper.

The wind roars among the rafters. The cattle low with terror. The straw whirls before his eyes; in the wavering lamplight the barn door is hidden. "If--if it grows no worse--" he stammers . . .

*So it was horses twice? both brothers sneer. Then your portion of luck is spent for good! This time a dragon will surely burn you up! And oh, what steed could make such mighty thunder? What kindly beast could shake the hills like that? In a spasm the Cinderlad lurches for the door. "A dragon now? It must be dozens of them!" Against the doorposts he stumbles, and clutching, gathers his thoughts. "What am I doing? Why do I flee? Who has been right, my brothers or I? Who had stood the ordeal twice o. even once? Third is last and best, and I will win My princess and my kingdom in the end."*

Gripping the doorposts, he steadies and stands and tries and tries to form the essential phrase. "If... if it grows... if it grows... no worse--" "no worse . . . if it grows no worse" "I can--if it grows no worse, . . ." "If it grows no worse I can, I can . . ."

Yearning he gazes towards his brothers' home.

The shuddering hills conceal a golden dawn. Before it gallops a steed with golden armor.

by Gwentyth E. Hood