

King's Quest

by
Roberta Williams

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long, long time ago, when unicorns still roamed the forests and the merfolk still dwelt in the shallow waters frequented by men, there ruled in the kingdom of Daventry King Edward and his lovely Queen. The people of Daventry were prosperous and happy, and everywhere peace reigned. But the King and Queen were sad because they were childless. They had no son to inherit the throne, nor a daughter to gladden their hearts.

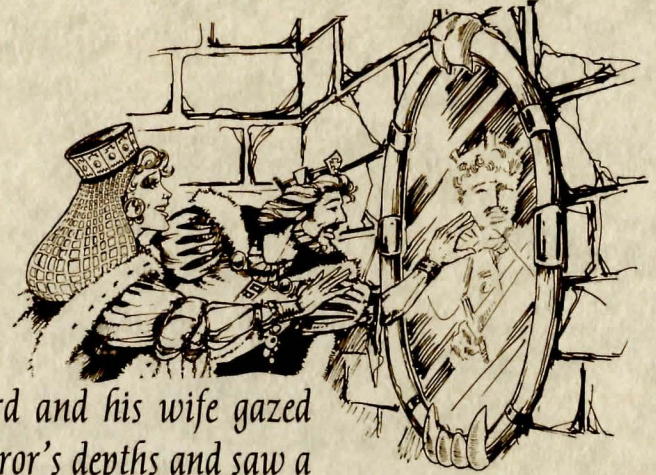
One bright, sunny day King Edward the Benevolent (for so he was called) and his Queen were walking in the castle garden when suddenly before them appeared a powerful sorcerer. "I know your problem and I can cast a spell that will bring you a child," he said.

"Oh, great sorcerer, if you can help us, we will be everlastingly grateful," said the Queen.

"We will bestow upon you many honors, and great riches," said the King.

"I have no use for honors or riches. My payment will not be so great. All I ask in return is the mahogany-framed Mirror that hangs in your private chamber."

The sorcerer's words gave them pause, for that Mirror was priceless. It had the power to read the future, and helped to keep Daventry prosperous. The royal couple used it to foretell the weather for planting and harvest, as had the kings and queens before them. It had been hundreds of years since a crop had been planted before the last frost, or had been ruined by autumn rain. What the sorcerer desired was indeed valuable. The King and Queen retired to their chamber to consult the magic Mirror.



King Edward and his wife gazed into the Mirror's depths and saw a young princely figure with a gold crown upon his head. Imagining the youth to be the son they yearned for, the royal couple gladly bestowed the Mirror upon the sorcerer. He took it to his dwelling, where he set one of his beasts to guard over it.

The months passed and the Queen did not conceive a child. For the first time in four hundred years, Daventry lost the harvest to an early autumn rainstorm. The King and Queen wept, and everyone tightened their belts. Instead of having excess produce to sell to neighboring kingdoms, the people of Daventry had to supplement their stores with food bought elsewhere.

With famine came the dreaded Plague, and the Queen was stricken. For three days she lay in the grip of a great fever, with Edward maintaining a constant vigil by her side.



On the fourth day of the Queen's illness, a diminutive figure pushed his way between the legs of the castle guards. "I have a cure for the Queen," he claimed. Quickly the courtiers ushered him into the Queen's chamber, where the King despaired.

"I have traveled a great distance to bring relief to your dear wife. This powerful root known only to dwarves will cure any plague."

The dwarf leaned over the Queen and touched the root to her lips. Her eyes fluttered open and she smiled at Edward.

The Queen's attendants looked at each other in wonderment. "Only a touch revived her," they whispered. "Imagine how fast she will recover when given the whole root!"

"Ask any reward for this miraculous gift, oh small one," exclaimed King Edward.

"I ask in repayment the Shield left you by your father when he died," said the dwarf softly.

The King paled at the thought. The Shield, made of titanium and set with emeralds, was traditionally carried in battle by the ruler of Daventry. Legend held that he who bore the Shield was invincible, and his army always victorious. Thus there had been no successful attack on the kingdom of Daventry for over five hundred years.

"Ask again little man. I will give you your weight in gold, but please do not ask for the Shield," said the King.

"You do not appear to value your wife's life, your highness," said the dwarf. "I will take no other reward than that which I have requested." Haughtily he turned to go.

"Come back," Edward called. "I'll give you the Shield." The Dwarf took the Shield, and secreted it away in a hole in the ground, in the way of Dwarves.

The Queen partook of the root, but to no avail. She worsened and died. Daventry's church bells tolled in mourning, and the King vowed vengeance against the false dwarf. Years passed, and the news of the loss of the Shield spread. Armies attacked the weakened Daventry, and the King went out to lead his armies without the Shield. Never before did they have need of the Mirror to foretell enemy moves. Now, that too was gone.



any years passed, and the King was very lonely. One day, while out riding with his courtiers, Edward came upon a pack of wolves tearing at the lower limbs of a big tree. When the group approached, the wolves scattered to reveal a beautiful young woman perched in the tree.

She descended regally. "I thank you for the rescue, kind sirs. I am the Princess Dahlia, of Cumberland. I was traveling through this land when that pack of wolves fell upon my group. My bodyguard fled in terror from their fangs, leaving me quite alone. I owe you my life, and my heartfelt gratitude."

The King was charmed with the Princess Dahlia, and brought her back to his castle to visit. He felt new life coursing through his veins, and knew it was because he had met someone who might fill the loneliness left by his late Queen.

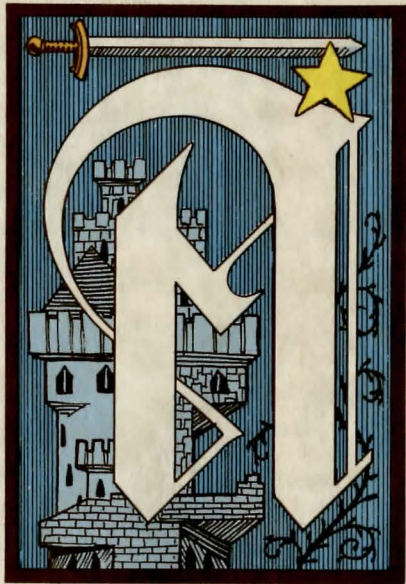
In due time Edward asked Dahlia to marry him, and she accepted. The people of Daventry were wildly excited at the prospect of a new Queen (and hopeful again of an heir), and made preparations for a glorious wedding celebration.

On the night before the wedding, when the air was thick with toasts and merriment, Princess Dahlia bid Edward good night. He never noticed her hand stealing up to his belt and extracting the ring of keys hanging there. Much later, the Royal treasurer approached the King with alarming news.

He had discovered the treasury door standing open, with the King's own key in the lock. The Princess Dahlia had been inside, holding a small Chest of gold.

The treasurer stood frozen to the spot. The Princess' bright laughter changed to a witch's cackle as her form grew old and withered. She grasped the Chest and mounted her broom to fly out the open window. The treasurer watched in dismay as she swooped up through the clouds and disappeared.

When the King heard the news, he wept in despair. That Chest was magic, and the last great treasure remaining in Daventry. No matter how much was taken from it, the Chest always remained brimful of golden coins. Without the Chest he could buy no more food, pay no more soldiers.



any more years passed, and Daventry grew poor and weak. King Edward was old and feeble, and saw that his end was near.

Fearing that the country would fall into even greater disorder when he died, he sent for his favorite knight, Sir Graham.

“You are the bravest and truest knight in my kingdom, Sir Graham. Long ago I envisioned your form in my magic Mirror, and thought I was seeing my son and heir. The years have proven me at least half wrong. But the prophecy may yet be fulfilled.



“To prove yourself worthy of my crown, I command you to journey out into the world and retrieve the three great treasures taken from Daventry by treachery and stealth. Succeed in this great quest, and you shall become King upon my death. Fail, and our beautiful Daventry will grow ever weaker until it is invaded and conquered by unfriendly nations. This I promise by all that is honorable and right.

“May you return victorious, Sir Graham!”



Become Sir Graham and travel through lands of myth and magic to recover the great treasures. You must retrieve them all, for only the combined magic of the three will restore Daventry to its former glory.

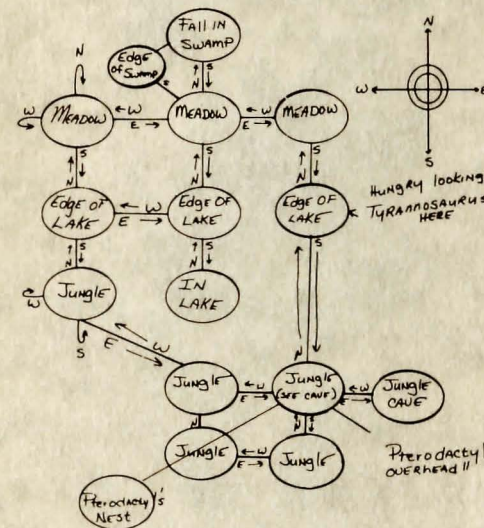
Look to the fables and fairy stories of yore for clues. Leave no stone unturned, no avenue unexplored, and you will triumph in your Quest. Along the way, collect as many treasures as you can. The kingdom of Daventry will need everything you can bring back. And you will profit from the experience.

It may be possible to accomplish each task in more than one way. The more imaginative your solutions, the better fitted you will be to rule Daventry.

MAP YOUR PROGRESS

You will not be able to fulfill the prophecy, Sir Graham, without charting your progress. Create a map showing objects and landmarks you see along the way. You'll want to note dangerous areas, in particular.

Here's a typical map:



Above all, try every direction and map all of the different possibilities. If you overlook an area, you might miss an important clue or necessary tool.

The road you must travel is long and perilous; it is beset by many dangerous beings. You must have the wisdom to know when to stand and fight and when to flee from superior strength. But take heart—you may receive help in unexpected places.

Go now, Sir Graham. And in the words of King Edward, “May you return victorious!”





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