

## *Fable of the Diamond Dove*

*By Pete Planisek*

Once long ago there were two brothers. Born into a poor family, they became bitter and each vowed never to be left wanting; to that end, as soon as he was old enough, the elder brother struck out into the world to seek his fortune. The younger brother tried to keep in touch with his absent sibling but soon the two drifted apart. The last he heard was that his elder brother was going to a distant country and would be in touch soon but no further word arrived.

Years passed and the younger brother devoted his energies to gaining wealth and power. He moved far from home, earned degrees, ruthlessly pursued any means to advance his career, and rarely spoke to his parents. Family became all but a distant memory. He didn't need them. They couldn't understand or appreciate his success.

Then one day word arrived that his brother had passed and, though saddened, the younger brother did not attend the final ceremonies of remembrance. Soon after a man arrived to carry out the last wishes of the eldest brother for the youngest; the first born had willed his sibling but one item – a dove. The younger found this gift absurd and bid the bird be taken away at once but then the dove, to the amazement of all present, committed a most extraordinary act. Upon hearing the younger brother reject him as a gift the dove shed a single tear, which fell in the form of a perfectly shaped diamond.

“What a gift,” the younger brother exclaimed, “see here, with this I will never be poor again.”

He bid the poorer man who'd brought him the dove to go. Once alone he bid the dove tell him its secret. How could a dove cry tears of diamond?

"I can only reveal my secret if you ask me to tell you my name," the dove explained. "You may ask me only once. Do you want to know my name?"

"No," the younger brother laughed in amusement. Why should he care what the dove was called?

Over the next few years the younger brother grew more and more wealthy. Life for him was easy and carefree. He took risks with his wealth for he knew that he possessed an endless supply. He came to own the finest clothes, the rarest artistic treasures, the largest businesses, and wanted for nothing. In matters of romantic conquests he excelled until he came to love one woman above all others and took her as his bride.

For a time there was love and for a time they were happy.

Then their lives began to change. They began to lose money. It wasn't much at first, no real cause for worry, but it did reveal that money could come between them.

"We will have children," the younger brother's wife decided one day as they lunched together in his office.

A distinctive noise caught her attention.

"What on earth was that?" She wondered as she rose to investigate.

"Yes, children, good," the younger brother absentmindedly agreed as he studied reports on his business activities.

It was then the wife discovered the dove cage her husband often kept concealed under a small sheet.

“I’d all but forgotten you even had this bird,” she declared as she glanced under the sheet.

“What’s its name again?”

“It has no name,” her husband reminded her as he rushed to her side.

“Oh,” she wasn’t listening; her eyes transfixed by the precious diamond that glistened upon the metal floor of the cage. “A diamond,” she breathlessly remarked.

“Likely just a trinket fallen off from some part of the cage,” her husband replied but his wife was not fooled. She retrieved the stone.

“I hid it there for you,” he lied. “The dove must have moved it.”

“It’s stunning,” she said.

“We’ll have it made into the finest necklace.”

“Yes, but first, let us discuss our future. Our children,” his wife said a moment before another ping was heard off the metal floor of the cage.

“In fact, I remember now, I hid two in the cage. Let me retrieve it and then we’ll go elsewhere to talk.”

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The younger brother hadn’t thought about the dove in years but now it dominated his sleepless hours. For some time it had not cried but at the mention of he and his wife having

children it shed not one but two tears. Was it an omen for good or ill? He could have been honest and told his wife of his misgivings but that might mean revealing his secret and if money could come between them what would the truth about the dove do?

He kept his secret and they had three children. For a time it seemed to bring them closer but the more children he had the greater the inner battle between the demands of his family and the demands of his businesses grew. He hired a host of servants, nannies, and tutors. He made sure they went to the right schools and would pursue interests in the right fields to make them wealthy. He did everything right but love them. His love of money prevented it. And as he lost more and more of it his wife realized he did not love her either and left.

Aging and increasingly alone the younger brother tried to control and hold on to his wealth but he couldn't. He sold more and more of his possessions; was forced to give up more and more of his businesses; and grew further and further away from family.

During this time he became obsessed with the diamond dove. He longed to know its secret but feared to give up the wealth it could create. As his fortunes shrank he began to seek ways to make the bird cry. At first it pained him to do so but over time it became easier and easier to accept that this was how it must be for he would not die poor.

Still each suffered until finally it became clear to the younger brother that the dove would not last much longer. Its life now drained with each tear it shed. He set about locking all of the diamonds in the largest safe he possessed. He bid his former wife and eldest son come to see him in the morning when he would show them their change in fortune. But the dove must be gone by then or it could serve to divide them.

That night he decided to celebrate. He built a roaring fire, fixed a sumptuous fare, and toasted his brother and the ailing dove with his last bottle of good vintage wine. After finishing he settled down in a comfortable chair before the fire. He snapped his fingers at the dove, which drew alert and he removed it from the cage.

“You told me once that you would reveal your secret if I asked your name. So I ask you now, as your master, tell me your name.”

For a moment nothing happened then the dove emitted one lone cry. The younger brother scoffed and rubbed the grey at his temples; so all these years of foolish paranoia had come to this. He smiled but found that smile fading seconds later as the bird began to shake and howl in pain. It began to grow until it changed from the form he'd known for so long into another he'd known once long ago. There before on the floor lay his dying older brother.

“My heart will burst soon,” the elder said, “You should have set me free years ago.”

“How could I have known it was you?” the younger brother groaned. “You disappeared a lifetime ago.”

“And that is supposed to justify your treatment of a poor, defenseless creature?” His brother asked before continuing.

“I travelled far and came to know myself; came to see the need to care for others beyond myself; such ways brought me freedom from my past. A man gave me the dove in gratitude and shared what wealth it offered freely to those in need. I watched over it with kindness until one day when I was injured. The dove saw my heart's deepest desire; it healed me with its tears and offered me the chance to heal you from the scars of your past as well. I accepted and was

transformed. But your greed knew no bounds; your heart no sympathy; you lived life only in support of your fears and will die wealthy in coin but poor in spirit. Oh brother, you are a pitiable creature for the only thing you've ever loved is fear.”

The younger brother was too stunned with grief to speak. As his only brother slipped away he heard a noise from his safe. Water, not diamonds, poured freely from it. In silence he awaited the dawn.



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