Inventions, Directions

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Summary

It's a case of not being lost, when it could be more like a case of not knowing exactly where one is at any given point.

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"Inventions, Directions and Horses" by Karen

'One would think,' thought Alice to herself, 'that after all the strange things I have seen while I've been down here, wherever 'here is,' that it would now be quite common to see something strange.'

She giggled for a while at the absurd notion and briefly toyed and turned over the idea in her head and finding that she rather liked the comparison before she brought up her hands to her mouth and smothered the giggle.
Meanwhile the sight which had occasioned the notion in the first place was making grunting and groaning noises in between of which Alice could hear him, it was definitely a he, talking to himself.

As she approached Alice realized what had struck her as so strange in the man's posture, for he was mounted on a four-legged animal that was an ivory from head to toe, man, plated all over in armor, and his mount, which upon closer inspection was a horse.

Alice had seen horses before if time still held any meaning for her down in this underground world when she had been taken for spring holidays to the countryside and a wealthy uncle's working farm.

This horse was much like the ones she had seen on the farm, of course, being a little girl and the younger of two children she had not been allowed anywhere near the sleek, beautiful animals, and only by the forbearance of a kindly groom had she been picked up and set upon the back of a riding pony.

That memory floated through Alice's mind briefly before she turned her attention back to the man and his horse.

"Hullo," the man said, still with his head pointed down toward the hard-packed ground of the road, dangling by one booted heel from the stirrup his mount calmly nibbling at the grass that had sprung up between the cobblestones at the sides of the road. "Is anyone there?"

"Hello." Alice cautiously approached. "Who are you?"

"I am the White Knight," the man replied.

"You appear to be in some of distress," observed Alice.

"Well, yes, yes I am. As it were, I find myself in quite a predicament. I was riding along, easy as you please, contemplating great things." The White Knight replied as he began to swing like a pendulum at the end of his tether in order to get a better glimpse at the little girl in the road.

"And might I inquire as to your name?" he added.

"Alice, Alice Liddell," she added with a curtsy as she had been taught, and while she was doing so, she thought 'If only my nurse, and my sister could see me now.'

"Pleased to met you, Alice," he said. "As I was saying, contemplating great things...." he trailed off.

"Are you a philosopher?" Alice asked aloud.

"Well, not really," the man replied still with his head down

"Do you need any help getting back into the saddle?" asked Alice with some concern, she had once studied for a school midterm exam while standing on her head on the sofa and had felt all the blood rush to her head making her extremely dizzy for a good time afterwards and her nurse had to come rushing over with cold compresses and put her to bed.

If it that held true for little girls than it must hold true for knights as well, for that's what she had decided he was, what with the armor, the horse and the various oddments that hung about his person and all over his mount.
"Yes, if you would be so kind," replied the Knight.

She hurried over and studied the knot that held him bound in place and wondered if she could undo them. He was much too tall and heavy for her to boost back up into the saddle. It was not going to be easy, but she was stubborn little girl and she would find a way to help him.

She shrugged and decided that it could not be helped. After all, she did not know just how long he had been hanging upside down like that and swinging about like that. She began to apply her slender fingers to untangling the knots.

He continued talking as she worked. "You see," he said after a momentary pause, "I was wondering if I could make the accessories of a knight more efficient and I came up with the marvelous assortment of oddments that you see before you today."

"Yes, I see," Alice eagerly nodded.

"The only problem is, as much as I enjoy being a Knight," again he trailed off and this time Alice wondered if he was beginning to lose consciousness or he had merely lost his train of thought.

His horse left off eating the grass long enough to lift its head and glance up at where they stood to its left and rolled its expressive brown eyes at them and then resumed eating the grass.

She had finally worked through the last knot when with a startling thump he clattered to the ground forcing Alice to jump backward in surprise. "Oooh, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to...."

"Quite all right, my dear," the White Knight replied. "I'm quite accustomed to the sensation, but if you would be so kind as to grab my arms and help pull me up, will be much appreciated."

"Oh, of course." Alice ran over and did as she was asked, unable to suppress another girlish giggle at the picture the two of them made. It took some doing and several tries later, but at last, the Knight stood on his own two feet once more.

"Thank you, my dear," he said.

"You are very welcome."

"As a reward, would you care for any of my inventions?"

"No, thank you, Sir," Alice replied. "Although it is kind of you to offer."

"Well, as I was going to tell you, I find that every so often I find myself longing for some other occupation other than the military."

"Might I inquire which ones, Sir?" Alice asked.

"I tried for inventor..." he replied gesturing with one hand at the jangling, dangling metal oddments hanging from his horse. "As you can see for yourself, how well that turned out.

"They are quite inventive."

"Now you are only being kind to an old fool, but I know better." He sighed.

"Maybe you should stop being so hard on yourself," Alice said and then gasped. "Oh, I am being too forward again, my nurse tells him so quite often, you know?"

"Hmm," the White Knight replied. "Out of the mouths of children, but where was I? Oh, yes, but then I tried for a philosopher, but I as you discovered I seem to do my best thinking while hanging
topside down, and since my career as a knight takes far and wide across this land of ours, I must needs spend quite a bit of time in the saddle."

"Which is why you tied yourself on," Alice said.

"Exactly," he replied smiling fondly at the unlikely rescuer, but if the sun in the sky is a reliable indicator still, although I have invented a time-keeping device of my own, the day is now far advanced and I must take my leave of you, my lady."

Alice laughed, there was a quaint old-fashioned honest-to-goodness Knight calling a little girl 'my lady', and bowing from the waist just like the knights in her storybooks did. It was all really quite amusing and cute in its own strange way. "Of course, I quite understand. I really should be going myself."

"Are you traveling far?" he asked.

"Yes. I must get to the final square," she replied.

"Then I may offer a bit of my own advice if you will take it," he replied. Alice nodded.

"Look to the boles of the trees and for a faint blue-green tinged moss on the bark, that will tell that you are headed in the right direction."

"I will do so. What direction is that I get quite turned around down here."

"Happens to the best of us," the White Knight nodded. "That will be due north. Can't-miss it."

"Thank you! Goodbye!" Alice replied.

"Goodbye, Alice, remember me, and thank you again."

With that he spurred his horse into motion with one booted heel and off they trotted down the road jangling and huffing and puffing all the way until they were lost to her sight.

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