The Minor Fall, the Major Lift

by karrenia_rune

Summary

The White Knight fancies himself as quite the inventor, so one day he decides that he can create fireworks.

Disclaimer: Alice in Wonderland, and Through the Looking Glass books are the original creations of Lewis Carroll, as are the characters who appear here or are mentioned. They are not mine and are only 'borrowed' for the purposes of the story.

"The Minor Fall, the Major Lift" by karrenia_rune

As was usually the case whenever he hit upon an idea for the latest in a long line of inventions, he must immediately implement the idea or risk losing it. The slightest delay would mean a swift departure from the idea like the stuffing spilling out of an unraveling down pillow.

His last invention, which had he had been very proud of even though they did pain his feet and toes depending on which foot he wore them on and when his horse was going uphill or downhill at the time and in poor conditions. All that aside; this would be his greatest invention, yet.

After an hour or more of whittling the tubes and lining them out one by one on the packed earthen floor of the forest clearing he, at last, had assembled a collection of over two dozen. Wound about on both the head and the butt of the tubes were streams of red, blue, and green silks that had come from his festival gear. He really did not mind very much for having to use it for the purpose of decorating his new inventions. After all, he could not recall the last time he had had been called upon to attend a festival or royal soiree.
He pushed the meandering thought to a back corner of his mind and set to work filling the hollow wooden tubes with the mixture of his carefully gathered store of black powder.

It was a mixture of sulfur, charcoal, and saltpeter - with the sulfur and charcoal acting as fuels, while the saltpeter works as an oxidizer. He had more or less worked out the exact components of each, but even if his first foray into creating an exploding device designed to create a visual display, then he could always go back and try again.

He went over to his patiently grazing mount and rummaged through the saddles bags until he found what he had been looking for, a rather battered but still quite serviceable matchbook. He took one out, lit it from the bonfire he had used when he’d stopped to make camp for the night; and then lit the fuses of each of the wooden pole, one by one.

This effort was slightly hampered by the fact that both the wooden tubes were twice as high as the lanky knight, but he preserved. He said aloud, I shall call these penny whistles and sparklers.”

The wooden poles ignited almost immediately and began to burn with an intensity that he found most gratifying. The acrid reek of the burning black powder got into his nostrils as it was wafted this way and that by the wind. He smiled a small but gratified smile, but then he began to wheeze and sniffle and the corners of his eyes turned red and itchy, but he forced the uncomfortable sensation aside in pursuit of making an invention a reality.

However, his body had other ideas and he suddenly could not hold it any longer, the convulsive sneezing nearly knocked him over and he walked back over to the numerous saddlebags for a kerchief, sneezing the entire time.

His eyes were streaming with moisture, and his nose was red. Finally, the sneezing fit came to an end.

When it did, he could finally return his attention to his invention:

The black powder ignited almost immediately, radiating out from the wooden cylinders with a rapidity that quite astonished him, however, when the fire had begun to spread beyond his campsite and into the grass and hard-packed ground.

Finally, he realized that he must act quickly and rushed to put the fire out. He leaped forward and begun to stomp with his mattock-toed left foot ignoring the embers that shot out at him until at last, the fire was out.

He stood for a moment like a stork wading in the shallows and reeds of a stream, beguiling the fish into a false sense of complacency as it glided along with the flow of the current. It was only after a moment or two that he realized that the flaw in his initial design had been the usage of wood for the casings instead of metal. He teetered dangerously back and forth and then fell on his posterior, still regarding the now considerably worse for wear metal device he fashioned in place of an actual boot.

He finally removed the mattock and bent forward at the waist, not with considerable grunting and groaning and creaking, and tugged and tugged, until with a popping and snapping sound, a large slab of metal broke free. It was still hot to the touch and he was forced to drop it, for a moment, to land with a thud on the now somewhat browner grass and undergrowth.

At his back, his horse, which had backed off at the first sight and smell of the previous fire, had now approached where his master sat and stamped and snorted.

“Not to worry, old bean,” the White Knight remarked to the horse. “I know what I’m doing,” he
wheezed, and shook his head, reaching to wipe away the moisture and grittiness out of the corners of his blue eyes.

The horse snorted and tossed its head back, shuffling its feet, as if to give its opinion on the matter.

The White Knight, laboriously rose to a standing position and picked up the now slightly cooler piece of metal, holding it in his hands, turning it around and around, and holding it up to the light of the slanting rays of sunlight that pierced down through rents in between the close-leaning trees in and around the forest clearing. “Hmm, dear fellow, that you may have the right of it, after all. I had hoped to create a device that now only would produce an explosive reaction, that it would also provide a means of diversion. It would seem that I must go back to the drawing board.”

The White Knight heaved a sigh and dropped the metal slab back down to the ground. “It will still be a good idea once I have worked out further details.”

He stole a significant look at his horse, that particular beast rolled its eyes. “Don’t look so downcast, there’s a good fellow. After all, where’s there’s a will, there’s a way. And I must say that I am much enamored of the idea of an excellent entertainment that will astonish all who see it.”

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!