

The Copper Crown



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In a bright castle on a green hill lived Prince Cedric, a small boy with wavy chestnut-brown hair and hazel eyes. His mother, Queen Elara, wore a deep emerald gown and a calm smile. Cedric often gave orders without listening. 'Bring my breakfast now!' he would shout, tapping his foot impatiently. The servants hurried, but their faces looked tired and sad.



One morning, Queen Elara handed Cedric a wooden box. Inside lay an old copper crown, dull and dented. 'This crown belonged to your great-grandfather,' she said gently. 'It was once shiny and bright. Wear it, and you will see.' Cedric placed the crown on his head. It felt heavy and cool. He wondered if it would ever shine again.



Cedric wore the copper crown to the kitchen. 'Make me twelve pancakes!' he ordered. 'And hurry!' The cook sighed and rushed. Suddenly, the crown turned green, like old lettuce! Cedric gasped. 'What happened?' he cried. He rubbed the crown, but the green stayed. The shiny copper was gone. Cedric frowned, puzzled and upset.



Cedric ran to the throne room where Queen Elara sat. 'Mother, my crown turned green!' he wailed. Queen Elara looked at him kindly. 'The crown has a special magic,' she said. 'It turns green whenever you give an unfair order. It loses its shine when you are selfish.' Cedric stared at the green crown. He wanted it shiny again. 'How can I fix it?' he asked.



Queen Elara smiled. 'Listen to your people,' she said. 'Be fair and kind.' Cedric wasn't sure what that meant. He decided to try. The next day, he went to the blacksmith's shop. Tomas the blacksmith was broad and sturdy, with a bushy red beard and soot on his cheeks. He was hammering a horseshoe. 'Your Highness!' he said, surprised.



'I need a new suit of armor,' Cedric announced. 'And I need it by tomorrow!' Tomas shook his head. 'That's impossible, Your Highness. Good armor takes time.' Cedric opened his mouth to shout, but the crown felt heavy. He remembered his mother's words. 'How long does it take?' he asked. Tomas blinked. 'A week, at least.' Cedric nodded slowly.



Cedric walked through the village. He saw Mira, a servant girl with curly black braids and a gap-toothed smile. She carried a heavy basket of laundry. 'Mira, bring me a snack!' Cedric ordered. Mira sighed. 'I have so much work, Your Highness.' The crown turned a deeper green. Cedric touched it. 'Why is it always green?' he muttered. Mira looked at him curiously.



Cedric sat on a bench outside the castle. He felt the crown's rough, green surface. 'Maybe I should listen,' he said to himself. He found Mira again. 'What work do you do?' he asked. Mira's green eyes widened. 'I wash dishes, scrub floors, and carry laundry,' she said. 'From dawn until dark.' Cedric listened. 'That's a lot,' he said. 'Do you get rest?'



Mira shook her head. 'Not much,' she said. 'The other servants and I are always tired.' Cedric thought about this. He had never asked before. The crown felt a little lighter. 'I will talk to my mother,' he said. Mira smiled her gap-toothed smile. 'Really, Your Highness?' Cedric nodded. 'Yes. I want to be fair.' The crown flickered, just a tiny bit less green.



Cedric went to Tomas the blacksmith again. 'I'm sorry I ordered you to rush,' he said. 'Please make the armor in a week.' Tomas's blue eyes twinkled. 'Thank you, Your Highness.' Then Cedric visited the kitchen. 'You can make fewer pancakes,' he told the cook. 'And you can take a rest.' The cook looked surprised, then happy. The crown shimmered slightly.



That evening, Queen Elara called Cedric to her side. 'I hear you have been listening,' she said, her dark brown eyes warm. 'Tell me what you learned.' Cedric took a deep breath. 'The servants work too hard. Tomas needs time for good work. I was selfish.' He touched the crown. 'It's still green, but it feels lighter.' Queen Elara smiled. 'Keep going, my son.'



The next day, Cedric called a meeting in the great hall. Tomas the blacksmith came, and Mira the servant girl, and many others. 'Tell me what you need,' Cedric said. Tomas spoke first. 'We need shorter working hours,' he said. Mira nodded. 'And time to rest.' Cedric listened carefully. He made a plan. The crown began to glow, just a little, like a tiny candle.



Cedric gave new orders, fair ones this time. 'Everyone will have two hours of rest each afternoon,' he announced. 'And no one will work after dark.' The people cheered. Tomas clapped Cedric on the back. Mira hugged him. 'Thank you, Prince Cedric!' she said. The copper crown shone brighter, the green fading like mist in the sun. Cedric felt warm inside.



Weeks passed, and Cedric kept listening. He asked questions and made fair rules. The crown grew shinier each day. One morning, he looked in the mirror and gasped. The crown was pure copper, bright and glowing! Queen Elara came to see. 'You did it,' she said proudly. 'You learned to be fair and humble.' Cedric smiled. 'It wasn't hard,' he said. 'I just had to listen.'



Cedric wore his shiny copper crown to the village festival. Mira danced with him, and Tomas played a merry tune on his hammer. Everyone laughed and celebrated. 'You're a good prince,' Mira said. Cedric shook his head. 'I'm learning,' he said. 'And I'll keep listening.' The crown sparkled in the sunshine. The whole kingdom felt happy and peaceful.



Queen Elara placed a hand on Cedric's shoulder. 'A kind leader with a humble heart makes everyone happy,' she said. Cedric nodded. He looked at his people, smiling and free. 'I will always try to be fair,' he promised. And the copper crown, shiny and bright, sat lightly on his head. Cedric had learned that listening and kindness were the best ways to lead.