

Prince Valiant

IN THE DAYS OF KING ARTHUR
BY HAROLD R. FOSTER



Our Story: THE LATCHSTRING IS OUT, AND ALFRED TIMIDLY OPENS THE DOOR OF HIS MOTHER'S HOVEL. PRINCE VALIANT FOLLOWS HIM INTO THE DIM INTERIOR, WONDERING.



"COME IN, MY FINE LORDS," CACKLES A THIN, RASPING VOICE. IN A CORNER A BUNDLE OF RAGS MOVES, REVEALING A HAGGARD WITCHWOMAN.



"SIT DOWN, YOU CRINGING SERF!" AND ALFRED OBEYS. "YOU ARE MY MASTERPIECE! YOU, WITH THE SOUL OF A SERVANT, ARE THE RIGHTFUL HEIR TO VERNON HALL! THIS IS THE HOUR OF MY REVENGE!"



IN A VOICE HARSH WITH HATRED SHE GOES ON: "FOR I AM THE FIRST, THE LAWFUL WIFE OF THAT MONSTER, THE LORD OF VERNON HALL, WHOM THE FIENDS HAVE AT LAST TAKEN, AND YOU, LOWLY ALFRED, ARE HIS FIRST-BORN!"



"YES, I WAS ONCE THE BEAUTIFUL LADY VERNON, MARRIED TO A DRUNKEN BRUTE WHO CARESSED ME WITH HIS BOOT AND KISSED ME WITH THE BACK OF HIS HAND. NOW YOU, AN IGNORANT PEASANT, ARE MASTER OF VERNON AND CAN HAVE GWENDOLYN BERKELEY FOR WIFE!"



THEN SHE TELLS THEM WHERE THEY CAN FIND THE YELLOWED PARCHMENT THAT PROVES BEYOND A DOUBT THAT ALFRED IS INDEED MASTER OF VERNON.



"THIS DAY I HAVE DRAGGED THE PROUD NAME OF VERNON DOWN TO THE LEVEL OF A LACKEY!" WITH A WILD BURST OF LAUGHTER SHE FALLS BACK, AND PEACE COMES AT LAST TO A TROUBLED SOUL.



LORD ALFRED OF VERNON HALL AND SIR VALIANT, PRINCE OF THULE, BECOME GRAVEDIGGERS.

NEXT WEEK:--The Parchment