

Story Line

Environment

The world is in turmoil. In countries near and far, kings are leading crusades to claim new lands as their own and to reclaim lands that had been lost in battle.

In a clearing deep inside the Dark Forrest the castle stands. There King Leo and his Queen Leonora live, together with the Princess and the Prince. Life at the castle would be a dream come true - if it wasn't for Cedric the Bull and his men, robber barons who hide out in the forest. Cedric has only one mission in life: to take over the castle and its incredible treasures ... and banish King Leo and his family from the country.

The Castle

For the peasants, visiting the castle is something very special. One has to straighten oneself up and make sure that one's shoes are not muddy.

Inside the castle there is a constant bustle. There is the smithy where the brawny blacksmith produces armours and weapons for the guards and soldiers. He also makes sure that the horses have shoes. A never-ending banging comes from the smithy, mixed with loud hisses as red-hot iron is plunged into the big wooden tubs of water from the well. It is also the smith's job to brand the livestock of the castle with the King's monogram, so that everyone can see that they belong to him. The blacksmith's son keeps the fire alight with a huge pair of bellows made from the stomach of an ox.

The warm-hearted cook, Rose, and her helpers work in the castle kitchens. Here they pickle and smoke oxen, lamb, wild boars and red deer so the meat will keep for a long time. In those days there were no refrigerators! Rose and her assistants are always very busy as the King and his men are very fond of meat... and they're always hungry!

Once a week the castle gets supplies from the nearest village on the fringe of the forest. A cart is sent to collect corn, meat, vegetables, mead and wine. These trips are very dangerous, as the road to the village passes through the Dark Forrest, where the wicked robber gangs live. King Leo always sends some of his best knights along with the cart, so they can protect it.

From time to time, travelling salesmen arrive with the most beautiful fabrics and glass from far-off countries. That is, when they manage to get through the Dark Forest without being robbed...

At the castle

King Leo.

The King is a strong and handsome man, but first of all he is clever. He always knows how to handle even the trickiest situations.

The King is also a very good hunter, and he has a large and valuable collection of arms.

King Leo is well aware of the dangers lurking in the forest in the shape of Cedric the Bull and his men. The King had to dismiss a former castle guard for theft, and now that guard has joined forces with Cedric and his men. This has given Cedric a unique opportunity to learn how the castle is organised. Therefore, King Leo makes a great display of rebuilding and thinking out new traps, for few are as cunning as the King himself.

Normally, King Leo is a cheerful man, but on rainy days he looks to the south-east, location of the Holy Land, where his brave son is leading the King's Crusade. But the King misses his son terribly. It is now three cold winters since the Prince left... and they haven't heard a word from him in all that time.

Queen Leonora.

The Queen is gentle and good and incredibly beautiful. She arranges bazaars and special fairs for the high nobility, and the money she collects goes to charity in the village, to make sure the poor peasants get food and clothes. She gets very annoyed if any of the noblemen try to avoid their responsibilities to the villagers.

Like the King, the Queen misses her son very much.

Princess Storm.

The strikingly beautiful Princess Storm has inherited her father's wisdom and intelligence, and her mother's gentle manners. But she also has a bit of a temper - and when she loses it, she really lives up to her name! Storm is the apple of the King's eye, and woe betide anyone who harms a hair of her head.

The Princess does not embroider or sing like other girls of her age; she prefers to swordfence and go hunting for wild boars. The King does not like this, so Storm has to sneak off in the early morning hours before her father wakes up.

Princess Storm loves to watch when Richard the Strong and John of Mayne practise fencing. She has learned a lot from them - which stands the castle in good stead when Cedric the Bull and his men attack.

Richard the Strong.

Richard the Strong has served his king and country for many years. He was knighted at a very early age, having learned everything he knows from a mighty warrior - his father. His father once won the King's special medal for his heroic actions against cruel robber gangs, and it's Richard's ambition to follow in his father's footsteps by beating the horrible Cedric the Bull.

Richard is King Leo's best knight, and though challengers have come from far and wide, no man has ever beaten him in single combat. Richard is highly respected for his quick mind and his unsurpassed ability to figure out the tactics of his enemies. His best friend is his own apprentice knight, John of Mayne; together, they make a fighting force that no villain can stop.

John of Mayne

John is the son of the nobleman, Sir Arthur, who apprenticed him to Richard the Strong at an early age. Now, John has learned almost everything Richard can teach him.

John grew up with Princess Storm, and it was he who taught her to fence, shoot and ride horses. When he was teaching the Princess how to use a bow

and arrow, she accidentally hit the blacksmith's behind, so he couldn't stand or walk for a whole week. The valiant John took the blame upon himself - for, unknown to anyone, he is secretly in love with Princess Storm.

Richard and John spend a lot of time practising their skills. They have to make sure they are always in tip-top shape, because they never know when their King and country will need them.

The Forest

The villagers call the forest the Witch Wood, because it is always shrouded in thick, low-hanging fog. At twilight the trees look like dancing witches and wizards, and it is common knowledge that the forest clearings were once used as places of sacrifice for evil sorcerers. Witches were burned at the stake for their magical abilities to call down all sorts of disasters on the people in the village. It is said that the fog is there because of the steam from the witches' brew boiling in huge vats.

The fierce Cedric the Bull and his men live in the forest, and are widely feared by ordinary people. They move as fast as the wind and nobody can hear their approach...until it's too late. The villains do not have a permanent home; instead, they move around constantly, always wiping out their tracks so no-one can ever map their movements.

On several occasions Cedric's men have mysteriously gained access to the castle, intent on frightening the King. They always leave behind their calling card - a drawing of a bull's head with glittering, luminous eyes...enough to make anyone shudder!

The people of the forest

Cedric the Bull

The evil leader Cedric the Bull is the thirteenth son of a king in a far-off land. On his deathbed the king left his country to his sons, but as Cedric was thirteenth in line the parcels of land ran out before he got his share. Cedric is obsessed by the thought of taking over the castle, seizing the power, and

banishing King Leo and his family from the land. Night and day, Cedric spends his time forming and discussing plans of attack. He is so evil that he can chop wood with his barehands when he gets really bad tempered.

Cedric always wakes up in a good mood, because every night he dreams that he actually succeeds in taking over the castle. He sees himself dressed in an ermine robe, with a gold crown on his head, lording it over nobility and villagers alike. But the good mood disappears the minute Cedric realises that it is only a dream. "I've been cheated" he growls to himself. "Some day - some way - I'll get my hands on the castle".

Gilbert the Bad

Gilbert the Bad is Cedric's expert on attacks. No-one but Gilbert knows how to build the incredible siege machines, and it was him who invented the lance (which he developed from the spear), the crossbow and the catapult that hurls huge boulders. Gilbert's latest invention, the attack tower, is now ready for use; it will give access to one of the castle's towers, and Gilbert can hardly wait to see it in action.

Gilbert never has a moment's leisure; all his time is spent dreaming up cunning and unique method of attack. He is never happier than when one of his wicked plans works out.

Weezil

Cedric the Bull's trailblazer, Weezil, was found in a basket in the forest many years ago, and Cedric has raised him as his own son. Weezil is an expert at finding new trails, and even the most impenetrable forest cannot prevent him from doing his job. Because of Weezil, no-one ever knows where Cedric and his men are hidden.

Weezil is the master of making traps and snares and even Cedric himself has suffered from this. He has found himself dangling head-down from a tree with his angle caught in a snare, he has fallen into several deep holes, and once he even had a whole cart-load of horse droppings spilled over him. But Weezil managed to convince his evil boss that it was for his own good, as he has to be certain that the traps actually work. Even covered in horse droppings, Cedric was able to laugh at the thought of his enemy, King Leo, in a similar state.

And then the story begins...

This year the harvest has beaten all records and King Leo wants to celebrate by hosting a special harvest festival. Everyone in the village has been invited. Because the King loves excitement, he has decreed that the festival will begin with a jousting tournament for all the knights. The villagers are delighted...but, out in the forest, so are Cedric the Bull and his men. This could be the chance they have waited for.

King Leo knows that Cedric will try to attack and take over the castle during the celebrations. So the King has allied himself with his closest and most trusted employees to hide the treasure and emeralds and gold coins in a safe place. The craftsmen have started to rebuild the towers, and the King has ordered them to install one of his most cunning new traps.

However, it is not only the King who is busy. All over the castle and in the village, everyone is active. The carpenter is making a new stand for the tournament. Rose and her helpers are cooking mountains of food for the feast. The smith is busy shoeing the horses and sharpening the knight's lances. The hunters have gone out into the forest in search of boar, rabbits, pheasants and deer.

The village children need to be washed and brushed, for those were the days when one did not have to take a bath very often. In fact, apart from bathing in the lake in summer, it was very difficult to get clean. You could not just turn on a tap for hot water; you had to go to the well to fetch the water in a bucket ... and you had to make the journey many times. But even an unaccustomed scrubbing cannot dull the thrill the children feel at the spectacle that lies ahead.

Hidden deep in the forest, Cedric the Bull and his men sneer at the thought of taking a bath. They are determined their evil plans will succeed, whether or not they are clean!

Finally, the great day arrives. First the knights provide the entertainment. The atmosphere is tense as their powerful horses, decked out in gold and

silver livery, neigh and scrape the ground, impatient to begin. Then the air is filled with the thunder of galloping hooves, as the horses carry their noble riders into the fray. The knights fight bravely, everyone of them determined to be the first who will finally vanquish Richard the Strong. Lances clash against shields, and the villagers' yells of applause can be heard for miles around.

Richard the Strong and John of Mayne honour their King by winning every round of the tournament. Satisfied, King Leo announces the tournament over, and Queen Leonora presents the prizes. There is a blast on the trumpets, and the King's herald steps forward to announce that the celebrations can begin. In the castle's Great Hall a band of minstrels starts to play, and soon everyone is eating and drinking and laughing and dancing.

This is the moment, Cedric the Bull has waited for. For hours, he and his men have been lying in hiding on the edge of the forest. Their weapons are in position, and the men are fired up all ready to fight, as Cedric gives the order to attack.

Noiselessly, the evil leader's first platoon sneaks through the long grass towards the castle's eastern face. Precision timing is important, because the whole plan depends on the first platoon's surprise assault.

Disguised as a peasant from the village, the leader of Cedric's second platoon urges his horse-drawn cart to approach the castle gates. It will be his task to distract attention and cause a disturbance - with the aid of the soldiers he has concealed in the cart.

Meanwhile, Cedric and his third platoon wait impatiently in a thicket. Their huge catapult and crossbows are greased and ready for destructive action, while Gilbert the Bad's new attack tower is ready to do its awful job of giving the villains access to the castle's towers. Impatiently, Cedric awaits the signal from his first platoon. In his mind's eye the attack works perfectly according to plan, and Cedric sees the golden crown on his head as he becomes the new ruler. "At last" he snarls, "I will be King!"

And then...

What happens next? Will Cedric the Bull's ruthless ambitions and cruel plans finally bring him to success? Or do King Leo's faithful guards spot the first platoon? Does Princess Storm, dancing with John of Mayne, notice the flash of the sunlight gleaming on shields in the ticket? Will the warning come too late to halt the villains' assault? Can Richard the Strong come up with a plan to save his King and Queen - or will Benjamin Bones the skeleton be needed as the last-ditch defence against the evil ones?

Only YOU can decide!



King Leo



Queen Leonora



Princess Storm



Richard the Strong



John of Mayne



Cedric the Bull



Gilbert the Bad



Weezil