

400 The Man on a Quest for His Lost Wife.

(Including the previous Types 400*, 401, and 401A.) This tale exists chiefly in three different forms:

(1) A man in distress (impoverished fisherman, merchant) unwittingly promises his (unborn) son to the devil [S240]. When the boy is delivered to him later, the devil cannot use him because he is protected by magic [K218.2] (cf. Type 810). Thus the boy is cast out in the sea (river, desert).

He arrives in a foreign country and finds a lonely castle where he meets a bewitched princess (maiden, fairy) in the form of a serpent (deer). He rescues her by enduring three nights of torture [D758.1]. They marry [F302, L161].

When he wants to visit his parents, his wife gives him a ring to carry him home [D1470.1.15], and she forbids him to call her to come to him [C31.6] (to boast of her beauty [C31.5]). At home he is induced (by his mother) to break the taboo. His wife appears [D2074. 2.3.1], takes the ring, and leaves him destitute.

The man sets out in search of his wife [H1385.3]. On his way he meets three hermits (rulers of animal kingdoms, or moon, sun, and wind) whom he asks for directions [B221, H1232, H1235]. With the help of the third he arrives at the empire of his wife, or he pretends that he wants to help three giants who are fighting over magic objects (inheritance, booty). He steals the magic objects (magic sword [D1400.1.4], magic coat or hood [D1361.14], seven-league boots [D1521.1]) [D831, D832] (cf. Type 518). With their help he is able to overcome the obstacles on the way to his wife [D2121].

When he finds his wife, she is about to marry another man [N681].

He discloses his identity as her real husband.

(2) Meeting the princess and disenchantment as in version (1); but the disenchantment is not complete.

The princess wants to travel back to her own distant land. She asks her rescuer to wait for her at a certain time and place. She appears three times, but each time a servant (witch) has put her husband into a deep sleep from which he cannot be awakened [D1364.15, D1364.4.1,

D1972]. The princess informs him (in a letter) how and where to find her (on the glass mountain). The man sets out to find her. Continued as in version (1).

(3) A youth watches a flock of birds (swans, ducks, geese, doves) land on the shore. The birds take off their feather coats and become beautiful maidens [D361.1]. While they are bathing, the youth steals the feather coat of the most beautiful girl, who cannot leave with the others and thus must marry the youth [D721.2, B652.1]. Later, because of carelessness (of the man's mother), the maiden takes back her coat [D361.1.1] and flies away (together with her children). She tells the youth her destination in the otherworld (e.g. glass mountain). The man sets out in search of his wife (as in version 1). Some variants include elements from Type 313 (Magic Flight).

Combinations: This type is usually combined with episodes of one or more other types, esp. 302, 313, 402, 518, 554, 810, and 936*, and also 300, 301, 303, 304, 314, 325, 326, 329, 402, 425, 465, 505, 516, 530, 531, 550, 552, 566, 569, 590, 707, and 1159.