

Who stole my crown (corona)?

By Elena Perikleous*

Once upon a time in a kingdom far away, I was born. I am not sure exactly how this happened. Nobody was ever able to explain to me who my mother or father was. I never even dared to ask about my grandfather and grandmother. I was just born. Along with a crown (corona) on my head. At first, I did not understand what this crown meant exactly. I would put it on every morning and look at myself in the mirror. And I'd say, "What a handsome fellow I am! This thingy really suits me!" However, at some point, I had decided to venture out of my room. Up until then, I had been waiting for myself to grow up. To become stronger. And finally came the day for me to conquer the world. I had not realized my power until that day.

I fully understood it when I began walking down the path of self-awareness. I became aware of the destruction I was causing. In the beginning, the subjects of that faraway kingdom welcomed me with handshakes and open arms. Some of them, who were friendlier than others, even allowed me inside their homes. They fed me, they put me to sleep. And what did I do? Instead of thanking them, I made them ill. I robbed them of the air they breathed. Firstly, through the nose, later through the throat and then I ended up lounging about their lungs. Some people could endure my presence easily and eventually kicked me out of their bodies. Literally. I won't say that I didn't deserve it because, as far as being a guest, I was terrible and had horrible manners. I wanted everything to be mine!

Others though, didn't have a strong enough immune system and could not get rid of me, and so I stayed put until they couldn't bear it anymore and they stopped breathing. Saying I felt bad would be a lie. You see, I have no emotions. I am not human. I don't know how to coexist. I only know how to exist, how to grow stronger and spread out. I am a virus. I am not anyone's son. I don't belong to any family and have never learned how to love.

I pranced around proudly, leaving in my wake burned earth! The crown (corona) on my head got increasingly larger and brighter. I had become a source of fear and terror in the kingdom. People locked themselves inside their houses. They started furiously washing their hands until they bled, believing I could penetrate their bodies through their hands and destroy them, if they touched their mouth, nose or eyes. They stopped hugging each other. They stopped eating together, in groups. They stopped travelling, meeting each other. Everyone withdrew into themselves. In other words, I managed to enter their lives and turn their world upside down. I had alienated them.

That wasn't my intention. I repeat; I merely pranced around wearing my crown (corona) on my head and swept everywhere. Up until some wiser men decided that they supposedly had to stop me. They needed to get close to me and steal the crown from me. It was the only way

to put an end to my destructive nature, for the crown was my power. Like the hair in that story with Samson. According to the legend, as soon as they cut his long hair, he lost his power. And so it was for myself too; if they stole my crown they would incapacitate me. They would combat me. They would defeat me. Just between us, though having said I don't possess any feelings, I was already exhausted by then. I already proved that I could win. I was no longer in the mood for prancing around. I had seen and done it all now.

And so, the king sent his town crier to every city and village of the kingdom and requested volunteers to steal the crown from me. Not many answered his cry for help. They were so afraid of me that almost all of them had surrendered to me. They had raised their hands in the air and admitted their defeat. But some came forward. Those who were braver than most. With a clear mind and strong heart. A heart that loved deeply the weak, the elderly, the vulnerable; those who were truly in danger because of me.

So, only three people appeared in the throne room in front of the king. All three of them were courageous, lionhearted and with bright eyes and spirit.

A Scientist who with his experiments wanted to find a way to make the crown disappear from on top of my head. A politician who would develop a complex plan of action, he said, with prohibitions and decrees and special forces of commandos, knights and snipers to vanquish me. And a child. With a single book in hand. He said that he would steal the crown on top of my head in no time with a secret plan, of which no one should ever learn or speak.

They gave the Scientist the time he had requested. He would attempt complicated equations and magical reactions for three days in his labs. To discover that substance which would get the crown off my head, stealing at the same time my power. The days passed but no luck! None of the attempts were successful. It was complete failure. Of course, the Scientist did not give up because like I said, he was brilliant and brave and had a deeply caring heart. He just lost. I defeated him! He said that he would keep trying but he needed time. I wasn't worried.

The politician asked for a three-weeks deadline. Truthfully, he made things difficult for me. He was having conference meetings with specialists, some of whom were telling him to do this, others to do that. He tried many different things. In the beginning, he had made the decision to ignore me and try to trick me on the sly. He failed. Instead, he only empowered me, because I managed to get inside people's lungs and send them home packing...with flu symptoms. He had managed to disseminate me everywhere. Later, he started on the prohibitions. He forbid EVERYTHING. He was all, "don't do this, don't do that...". "Don't talk, don't ask, don't go around outside. Always wear gloves and ask for face masks. Use lots of hand sanitizer...And give only virtual hugs. Don't send me kisses even if you are miles away!" He restricted me. He put me in a tight spot. But I was ready to attack back, because I had become so powerful that I had reached almost everywhere. The three weeks' time he had requested passed and I was still alive, writing history. I came, I saw, I conquered. In his grand decree, the politician said that he would continue trying too! He didn't scare me either.

The time came for the child to try his luck too. He said that he only needed as much time as three moons lived. I accepted the challenge. As if a kid could scare me. And then? After that, he put on his magical cape and unleashed his superpower. What do I mean by this? Be patient and don't ruin the plot flow. When the time comes, I'll tell you. You see, I didn't know that a child could do anything! He took out of the superhero backpack his secret weapons: books, books, and even more books. Books that gave him magical journeys, and fun games, magical candies, and comforting hugs. His superpower was to **stay home – holding his books in his arms – and staying healthy**. To travel with his imagination to incredible places, ignoring me with a stubbornness fit for a victor. To wash himself well. To go out carefully and only to open meadows. He did it. He kept me away from him for as long as the three moons lived. He stole my crown and deprived me of my power. He locked me back into my old room again. Alone and weak, with no crown on my head, I waited then for the Scientist and the Politician to give me the last blow. They had beaten me. I had to admit it. I would be lying if I said that I was happy about it. Though, saying I was sad would be a lie too. As I said, I have no emotions. I am just a virus. The only thing I'm certain about is that my crown was stolen by a child. A superhero. What was his power? To **stay home – holding his books in his arms – and staying healthy!**

And some lived well, others lived happily ever after, and I – trounced and sans crown – lived disempowered and isolated. You have defeated me once and for all!

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