

To Be The Queen — A Modern Day Parable

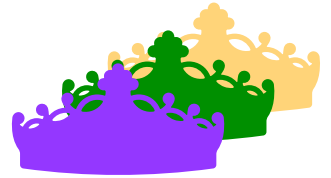
Inspired by Mark 1:40-45

A young lady who had grown up in Louisiana returned to her home state in search of healing, direction, and renewed purpose. She had spent years running from her heritage trying to find her own place in life. She had always assumed happiness would be found somewhere else. Ten years, three modeling agencies, two countries, and one divorce later, she realized it had been here all along amidst the cypress trees and the bayou breeze.

Bella stepped across the wide front porch and over the threshold into her childhood home. Three steps in and she heard the familiar creak of that old pine floor. She checked the entry stairway banister and sure enough -- it was still a little wobbly after all these years.

No one had lived in this house since her mom died two years ago. Yet Bella could swear she smelled gumbo cooking on the stove. She opened the shutters and let in the sun, and she took a deep, deep breath of home. She walked through the rooms and took in the peace of this wonderful place. She spent quite some time looking at old photo albums and reliving the years of Mardi Gras past in the captured portraits on the walls. One of Bella's childhood dreams had been to be the Queen of Mardi Gras like her mother and her mother's mother. She wished she hadn't let go of that dream.

One week after returning home, Bella was strolling down Main Street reacquainting herself with the familiar sights and sounds. She stopped at the Magnolia Cafe, a fixture here that was owned by one of the founding families. Seated on her usual perch was Ms. Mae who ran the annual Mardi Gras parade and ball. Bella walked to Ms. Mae and kneeling down begged her and said, "If you wish, you can make me the Queen."



Moved with pity, Mae stretched out her hand, touched Bella's cheek, and said, "If it isn't Beautiful Bella back home at last! Stand up child, and let me look at you! Your Mama would be so proud that you have returned to the place that loves you best. I do will it. Be made Queen!" Then, warning her sternly, she dismissed her saying to her, "See that you tell no one anything, but go show yourself to Mr. Moses at the Tailor Shop for your gown fitting. Give them my card. That will be proof for them. I want your grand entrance at Twelfth Night to be a surprise!"

The young lady went away and she just couldn't help herself. She began to publicize the whole matter. Her childhood dream was coming true and this would definitely be a new beginning in an old place. She told everyone the story of Ms. Mae making her the Queen of Mardi Gras, and dedicating this year's Ball in memory of her mother. That gossip chain spread faster than a hurricane. The town's curiosity tipped the scales, so that it was impossible for Ms. Mae to have coffee and dessert openly on the cafe balcony. People kept coming to her with questions galore from everywhere!

