

## Story of Rimenhawii

### Rimenhawii or *the Crimson Flower*

There was once a beautiful woman whose name was Rimenhawii. Her husband's name was Zawlthlia and he loved her very dearly. She was greatly famed for her beauty, and her special pride was her hair, which was as beautiful as it was possible to be. Rimenhawii was very proud of her beauty and frequently went to the river which flowed near her house, where she entertained herself by bathing and by gazing at her reflection in the water. One day when she was so engaged, one of her long, beautiful hairs became detached from her fair head and floating down with the stream was soon swallowed by a large fish. Some time after this the servants of a king who lived lower down on the banks of that river were catching fish for him. While doing so they caught one that was very much larger than any other fish that they had ever seen in the river. The king's servants were very much surprised when they saw what had come to their net, and they said to each other, "What can this fish have eaten to make it so big?" They carefully examined it and found that inside it there was a long and beautiful hair, so long indeed that when wound round a reel it filled a large basket. They took it to their master, the king.

When the king saw the hair so fine and bright he became possessed with a great longing to see the owner of it. He issued a command to his servants saying, "Go and find out for me the name of the owner of this hair." And in obedience to his wishes his servants set out and traveled along the bank of the river towards its source, seeking the woman whose head had borne such beautiful hair. In their hands they took for her gifts, oranges, lemons and many other kinds of fruit. All along the banks on both sides of the river they searched and enquired until at length they came to the house where Rimenhawii lived.

When they reached the house they were unable to open the door; they therefore shouted aloud, "In thir a mi, in dar a mi, tu maw I hming min hrilh rawh"

"You of the iron house,  
You of the brass house,

What may your name be?" Within the house Rimenhawii heard them singing, and it appealed to her vanity that strangers should thus enquire after her. She also replied in song:

"Hming lem hming lem ka nei lo,  
Tuisik Ringi ka ni e, Antlak Ringi ka ni e"

"I have no special name, No honoured name is mine.  
I live on water pure and sweet, and food unmixed with brine."

When they heard these words the king's messengers were satisfied that they had found the object of their quest, and at once set put upon their return journey. Arriving at the place, they went into the presence of the king and said to him, "The maiden says that her name is, "She who lives on water pure and sweet." The king, when he heard this, was not very pleased; so he said to his servants, "There can be no such name as that. Go again and ask what the maiden's name really is." They then set out again and traveled until they came to where Rimenhawii lived. They sang to her as before:

"In thir a mi, in dar a mi, tu maw I hming min hrilh rawh"

"You of the iron house, you of the brass house,  
What may your name be?"

She replied to them as she had previously done, and they could do nothing but give the same message again to the king. This answer, however, Was not enough for him, and yet again he bade them return to find out the real name of the object of his desire. This time the maiden deigned to be more communicative and replied in song,

"Hming lem hming lem ka nei lo,  
"Rimenhawii ka ni e, Menchanghawii ka ni e"

"Crimson Flower is my name; Crimson as a burning flame."

Hearing these words the messengers hastened with all speed to the king's palace and requested an audience of him. But even as they were sitting in the waiting room, they were so concerned in asking about the welfare of their friends that they quite forgot the words of the fair maid who had sung to them of the crimson flower. Crest-fallen and not daring to go into the presence of the king without the name for which he was waiting, they again made their journey to the hills to find out the name of the owner of the beautiful head of hair. They enquired of her as before and her reply was the same:

“Rimenhawii ka ni e, Menchanghawii ka ni e”

"Crimson Flower is my name; Crimson as a burning flame."

Bent on making sure that they would remember the name aright this time they kept on muttering to themselves all along the way back the first syllable of the words which she had sung to them "Crim". If one stumbled, all said "Crim". If they sat down at mid-day to eat food they all said "Crim". If they crossed a river one of them would be sure to say "Crim". Traveling in this way they came again to the palace and by this time they could think or speak of nothing else but "Crim". Even in the presence of the king all they could say of the name of the beautiful woman about whom they had been sent to enquire was "Crim".

The king was again very dissatisfied with them. He told them, "There can be no such name as "Crim". Go quickly on pain of dire penalties and bring back to me the full name correctly."

The messengers went yet once again to the house of Rimenhawii and addressed her as before. She replied to them as on their former journey, and this time they heard it clearly, they understood it rightly and remembered correctly, until they arrived at the palace of the king. At once they told him the name of the beautiful owner-of the hair. For the first time he accepted their message and said, "That is a name."

After he had heard Rimenhawii's name the king wished to marry her, and he cared nothing for the fact that she was already- married and that she and her husband loved each other dearly.

He sent trusty messengers to bring her to him. When they arrived at the door of her house they found that it was locked and there was no way of getting into the house unless it was opened from the inside. Rimenhawii's husband had gone on a journey and had locked the door of the house lest strangers might come and steal away his beautiful wife. The messengers had in their hands the king's gifts, and with these they sought to tempt Rimenhawii to leave the protection of her house. They climbed to the roof and from there they dropped first some lemons but these did not tempt her. Next they tried other fruit but still with no effect. At last they dropped some sweet and juicy oranges and these she could not resist. She hastily snatched at them as they were falling, and at that very moment the men on the roof bent down and caught her by a lock of her beautiful hair. They threatened to pull this out by the roots if she would not open the door for them, and as that was a punishment she could not bear to think of, she opened the door, which they quickly entered and made her their prisoner. Before the king's messengers had time to take her away she charged her fowls and the other entire creature that dwelt in her house to tell her husband immediately he arrived how she had been taken off. She also said to them, "As I go along I will unroll a long thread of cotton. If he follows that he will find me." She had time only to give these directions before her captors hurried her away.

In a very short time her husband returned and as soon as he entered the house the fowls and the dogs and the cat and the pigeons and the pigs and the cattle rushed to him and all told him what their mistress had said. He at once set out to follow his beloved Rimenhawii without as much as waiting to eat food. He easily followed her by keeping in sight the cotton thread which was clearly visible on the path. About nightfall he came up with the party who were taking off his wife, and as he fell upon them suddenly and took them by surprise he was able to slay the strangers who had stolen his dear one from him. He led her back to their own home where no wicked king ever troubled them again.